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INSIDE TODAY'S SECTION TWO

WEDNESDAY 15 MAY 1996

40p (IR 45p)

The groupie's  
guide to Cannes  
Living

Bridget Jones looks  
after the babies

The banker and  
the racial slur

The Anglo-Japanese affair turns sour

## Semtex error could free 12 IRA men

Ministers order review of evidence

HEATHER MILLS  
Home Affairs Correspondent

The criminal justice system was dealt another blow last night when the Government revealed that at least 12 IRA prisoners – a third of all those jailed in the last six years – may have been wrongly convicted because of contamination in a forensic science laboratory.

Government sources stressed that the chances of there being any miscarriages of justice were slight, but conceded the numbers of cases involved could be even higher following an independent investigation into the work at science laboratories in Kent. The news is a major setback in the fight against terrorism because of police fears that guilty men could go free.

Last night neither the scientists, the Home Office, nor the Crown Prosecution Service were prepared to identify which cases had been called into question by the discovery two months ago of explosives traces on a key piece of laboratory equipment. But 38 people have been convicted of explosives charges since 1989 – the time from which contamination may have occurred – and those cases over which there may now be some doubt are believed to include John Kinsella, one of those convicted of the Watlington gas works bombing and Felim O'Halloran, a university lecturer convicted of possessing Semtex.

The news of the accidental discovery, two months ago, of contamination by RDX, a component of Semtex – favoured by

the IRA – broke to the Commons yesterday. Traces were discovered by accident in a crucial piece of machinery used in the analysis of evidence in bomb cases.

The equipment, a centrifuge machine the size of a microwave oven, has been used in almost all forensic tests on terrorist bombings since 1989. But it

certainly one in which the Home Secretary should have made a full statement to the House of Commons instead of sheltering behind an incomprehensible written answer.

Irish government sources said: "The possibility that any person might be convicted on the basis of contaminated evidence is obviously a cause for concern. In view of the potential gravity of the issue we trust that the review and subsequent referral to the Court of Appeal will proceed in an expeditious manner."

But Mr Howard maintained last night that he doubted the inquiry would lead to the freeing of any IRA prisoners. "The chances of there having been a miscarriage of justice as a result of what has been discovered are very small, but I don't want to take any risks or leave any stone unturned. That is why we are having an independent investigation to look at this thoroughly, rigorously and speedily."

The affair is a major embarrassment for British justice which had been hoping to put behind it the spectre of a series of miscarriages of justice involving innocent Irish people – like the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four, the Maguire family and Judith Ward – most of which involved flawed forensic evidence.

The cases of the Maguire family and that of Judith Ward – both going back to 1974 – included suggestions that the same laboratory at Fort Halstead was contaminated.

TURN TO PAGE 2

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## news

# Beaver Dobson's attack shows the value of yogic flying

Yesterday saw the dawning of a New Parliamentary Age. In Pall Mall, England's fifth largest party held a press conference to reveal the names of those whom it would invite to share the co-operative administration of the realm. The Natural Law Party believes that government should be in the hands of the those who have "demonstrated the highest degree of creativity, alertness, organising ability and good fortune".

Bit of a blow for Douglas Hogg, then. The good news is that Edward Heath and Betty Boothroyd, robed in saffron, will be asked to lead MPs in daily meditation and yogic flying.



DAVID AARONOVITCH

Earlier, Tony Blair had been espousing similar values of calmness and contemplative deliberation for the Commons. His party (presumably now rechristened Natural Labour) wants to rid the House of adversarial, "yab-boo" politics. Points of agreement, as well as difference,

will be emphasised. MPs who interrupt and shout will be made to sit on the naughty step.

Depressingly, it took some time for his own members to get the message. Health questions were barely a minute old when Labour frontbencher, Henry McLeish (Fife Central) chided ministers for displaying "their characteristic complacency". The situation (kidney dialysis in this instance) was "grotesque" and "totally unacceptable". Not many marks for constructiveness there.

Natural Labour also promises to reform Parliamentary procedure. Which would have helped when John Bowis, the Secretary of State, was aware that "on Friday I had a tooth extracted on the NHS, which brought me relief and the dentist satisfaction". The addi-

gentle junior Health minister answered a written question thus: "Madam Speaker, I last did so on March 13th at the Council of Ministers". Did what? Talk dirty? Play draughts? Meet a European?

We never found out. Barry Field, the erratic member for the Isle of Wight, confused me even more by congratulating the Government on extra resources given for mental health in his constituency, and then asking the Secretary of State whether he was aware that "on Friday I had a tooth extracted on the NHS, which brought me relief and the dentist satisfaction". The addi-

tional money cannot arrive too soon, I thought.

But Prime Minister's Question Time was bound to be the greatest test of the political Age of Aquarius. And, indeed, Mr Blair asked his opponent a nice, soft-voiced question about school security, which Mr Major answered in pleasant, modulated tones. You could practically smell the incense. Liz Lynne, more Democrat than liberal, invited the PM to disapprove of violent movies, which he did. Teressa Gormans pointed out that the extra costs of the single currency for Marks & Sparks would mean "kickers" going up". The trouble is that

up is exactly where the straight-faced Major, Blair and Lynne think knickers ought to be.

The desirability of Natural Labour's approach came home to me fully later on, during the Frank Dobson Show. If ever there was a politician for whom the terms "unnecessarily adversarial" and "cheap political point scoring" were invented, it is Labour's environment spokesman. Funny and round, an eager, toothy smile on his face, Mr Dobson is like a cartoon beaver on speed — when he gets going you can hear his tail thrumming on the seat. And his overblown vocabulary is almost entirely taken from the boys'

antics of 40 years ago; villains (the party opposite) are fixers, fiddlers, twisters, "up to their necks" in this or that "squalid" or "scandalous" affair.

As a result it is tempting to discount what he says. Which is what was doing during Labour's debate at Westminster council. Until two-thirds of the way through Beaver's evidence, I realised that in this case all his epithets were entirely justified. But so devolved is the currency of outrage and condemnation (will there be no patients waiting for dialysis under Labour, Mr McLeish?) that we sometimes do not know truly dreadful behaviour when we see it.

## IN BRIEF

### Police arrest 45 in stolen goods sting

Police made 45 arrests and recovered more than £100,000 worth of property yesterday at the culmination of an exercise in which they opened a fake second-hand shop and bought stolen goods from burglars.

Ian Blair, assistant chief constable of Thames Valley Police, said: "Thieves were filmed at the east Oxford shop as they sold stolen property to undercover detectives. "It was a tremendous effort, and very brave, dealing with people who could be pretty nasty if they found out who you were," he said.

"This was an innovative approach by police to strike fear among burglars. They don't know what will happen next."

### 200 pit jobs lost

A former British Coal pit is to close with the loss of 200 jobs. Administrators said there had been no realistic bid for Hem Heath colliery in Staffordshire, one of five owned by Coal Investments which has been run by administrators called in earlier this year. Negotiations to sell the other Coal Investment mines are still in progress.

### Paint bomb penalty

Three students and a teacher who bombarded the Conservative Party chairman Dr Brian Mawhinney with paint and flour outside the Commons were given community service or attendance centre orders by Bow Street magistrates. Karen Doyle, 19, Naveed Malik, 18, Amanda Egbe, 20, and Anthony Gard, 24, must also pay £1,000 for damaged clothes.

### IRA man in jail move

An IRA terrorist with terminal cancer has been transferred from Northern Ireland to a jail in the Republic. Paddy Kelly, 43, was moved from Maghaberry prison near Lisburn to Portlaoise jail south of Dublin. Politicians on both sides of the border feared for the peace process if Kelly died in a UK jail. He is serving 25 years for attempted murder and conspiring to cause an explosion.

### Seal free again

A rare hooded seal swam back into the Atlantic, six months after she was found starving on a Cornish beach 2,000 miles from her Arctic home. The seal, called Robyn, was nursed back to health at the National Seal Sanctuary in Gweek, Cornwall, then spent a week at the Hillswick Wildlife Sanctuary in Shetland before being released back to the wild.

### Nuclear leak fines

The UK Atomic Energy Authority was ordered to pay more than £15,000 in fines and costs after radioactive waste leaked from an underground pipeline. The waste contaminated groundwater with radioactive tritium near the Winfrith nuclear site in Dorset. The pipeline is part of a reactor shut down in 1990 and currently being decommissioned.

### Lots of cricket

A collection of books once owned by the cricketer W.G. Grace is to be sold by auction in the summer. Under the hammer in Exeter on 11 July will be more than 150 volumes, many signed by him and some written by him, action pictures and a rare set of 1864-1915 Wissens.

**BSE crisis: EU still reluctant to lift embargo as family sues Government over CJD death**

## Bonn and Paris could keep beef ban in place

SARAH HELM and DONALD MACINTYRE

Britain's chances today of securing an easing of the beef ban for gelatin, tallow and semen was still in doubt last night as France remained hesitant, and Germany strongly signalled it may call for further delay.

The French President, Jacques Chirac, who began a state visit to Britain yesterday, appeared ready to be supportive of Britain but gave no sign to John Major that France would vote in favour of the immediate relaxation.

Germany, meanwhile, indicated that it would seek to keep the pressure on Britain by calling for a decision to be stalled. German sources said last night that although Bonn is not in principle against easing the ban, it believes more time will be needed to study the public health implications.

A rejection of the call to ease the ban — or a decision to stall a ruling — would inflame anti-European sentiment in Britain and set the Government on a damaging new collision course with the EU.

The Government faces an immediate backlash if today's meeting does not go Britain's way — with some Euro-sceptic MPs threatening to vote with Labour in tomorrow night's Commons debate on agriculture policy. But right-wing ministers will see it reinforcing their case for an urgent change in the law to prevent British courts enforcing European trade law in ways which will severely limit the scope for UK retaliatory measures against the beef ban.

The Foreign Office has gone out of its way to say that Britain will not adopt "illegal" retaliatory measures. Attempts to block meat imports from the EU would almost certainly be

successfully challenged in the British courts as being in conflict with European law. If the sceptics' proposal was accepted such law could not be enforced until it had been tested in the European Court of Justice.

The Government sees today's decision to be taken at a meeting of the Europe's Standing Veterinary Committee, as a crucial test of its ability to move towards a total lifting of the ban.

The committee's veterinary scientists, representing each member state, will consider a proposal for modifying the ban from the European Commission, which has already accepted that there is no scientific case for maintaining the ban on the three beef derivatives.

However, whether the commission can persuade other member states to back its recommendation will depend on the strength of controls and conditions set out in the commission proposal. The proposal had by last night gone through several drafts as attempts were made to tighten the conditions in order to gain the best chance of securing a vote in favour.

Today's final draft is certain to recommend that Britain must set in place strict new production safeguards for the beef derivatives and should agree to rigorous monitoring procedures which could take months to finalise. Gelatin, for example, will in future have to be heated at 140C for four seconds.

In an extraordinary piece of horse-trading France yesterday suggested that it might agree to pre-empt any electoral threat from Sir James Goldsmith by seeking to reassure Euro-sceptic voters that the Conservatives were now "the referendum party".

He went out of his way to promote Europe as a potential vote-winner for the Tories on the grounds that "a vote for any other party — whether it is serious about power or merely seeking protest votes — will put that European future at risk."

As Kenneth Clarke, the Chan-



Isha Andrews launching her family's legal action against the Government yesterday over the death of her mother from Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease.

Miss Andrews, 23, a catering student, blames the Government for the death of her mother, Fionnie Van Es, 44, in 1994 from the human equivalent of "mad cow's disease". She is seeking legal aid in the first case

of relatives suing over BSE.

Other grieving relatives joined Miss Andrews and her brothers, Tjark, 21, and Jobbe, 14, in their home town of Banbury, Oxfordshire, yesterday for a CJD Families Support Group meeting.

Their mother, who was born in the Netherlands, died after a three-month illness.

Miss Andrews said: "The

meeting is to get all the families together and see if we can achieve something. If anybody has a heart to listen, then we might have some success, if everybody is ignorant, we don't."

"My mum was a fit and healthy normal woman but she began to get depressed which was totally out of character for her, and that's when we realised something was wrong."

Miss Andrews' solicitor, David Harris, said the possibility of a link between CJD and BSE-infected beef had to be investigated. "If Miss Andrews' mother was eating beef after the Government had said it's safe and there is information that comes to light on discovery that says that it was not, then I think she would have a very valid case."

Her solicitor, David Harris, said the possibility of a link between CJD and BSE-infected beef had to be investigated. "If Miss Andrews' mother was eating beef after the Government had said it's safe and there is information that comes to light on discovery that says that it was not, then I think she would have a very valid case."

Photograph: John Lawrence

## Mawhinney rules out referendum

DONALD MACINTYRE AND DIANE COYLE

Brian Mawhinney, Tory party chairman, yesterday moved to pre-empt any electoral threat from Sir James Goldsmith by seeking to reassure Euro-sceptic voters that the Conservatives were now "the referendum party".

He went out of his way to promote Europe as a potential vote-winner for the Tories on the grounds that "a vote for any other party — whether it is serious about power or merely seeking protest votes — will put that European future at risk."

Mr Clarke went out of his way to stress that the EU was

ceilor, made a strongly pro-European speech to the German-British Chamber of Commerce. Dr Mawhinney was insisting that "only a vote for the Conservative Party will guarantee the defence of the nation state."

Dr Mawhinney was unequivocal in warning — in the wake of talks between John Redwood, the former Welsh Secretary and Sir James — that there was no question of a referendum on the wider issue of the UK's EU membership, adding: "I should make clear that there is no question of negotiating this position with any other party."

Mr Clarke went out of his way to stress that the EU was

"to our national interests, both commercial and political." Mr Clarke's passionate defence of the political as well as merely economic importance of membership will be seen as a rebuke to those Euro-sceptics including Mr Redwood who have in effect argued that Britain signed up only for the single market.

Mr Clarke declared: "I simply do not believe that you can separate economics from politics. The economic and trading interests of a nation are at the heart of politics; political decisions affect a nation's economic and trading environment."

The Chancellor added: "We

must have the self confidence and the determination to play our proper part in shaping Europe. In 10 or 20 years' time I want to see the UK at the heart of an outward-looking, free-trading, flexible and democratic union of nation states."

The Governor of the Bank of England threw his weight behind the Chancellor, saying that British business and a large majority of the British people were "enthusiastically committed" to the Single Market. But he cautioned Britain's European partners against pushing too hard or too fast towards the single currency.

The Chancellor added: "We

## Error could free IRA prisoners

FROM PAGE 1

The Laboratory was run initially by the Ministry of Defence and more recently by the Defence Evaluation and Research agency.

In fact, it was Professor Brian Caddy of Strathclyde University — called in to investigate the 500 cases which have passed through the laboratory since 1989 — who concluded that laboratory contamination of the Maguire's hand swabs was the only explanation for the unique pattern of positive results.

Last night Alastair Logan, solicitor for the Maguire family said: "This simply demonstrates

that this laboratory has never been able to control contamination — the Home Secretary should widen the inquiry to cover the period from 1973."

Mr Howard accepted in his Commons written answer that the discovery could lead to a number of terrorist cases being referred to the Court of Appeal.

He said: "There is a small theoretical possibility that any casework sample showing RDX traces may have been affected by the centrifuge contamination.

"On present information, there may be around a dozen such cases which resulted in convictions."

Those cases — and all the other

— will now be examined by Professor Caddy, who will determine whether the centrifuge contaminated key evidence, the extent to which forensic evidence helped secure a conviction, and the procedures used in analysis work at the laboratory.

But Michael Mansfield, a leading QC, said it was a "horrible" situation. "There have been substantial recommendations for tightening quality control, none of which have been put into effect," he added. "Everyone has known about their risks, and it should have been countered and revealed at an earlier stage."

But on 14 March, an accident

in the laboratory revealed that one of the key pieces of equipment — a centrifuge — was contaminated on 30 millionths of a gram of RDX. Furthermore, it seems plausible that this could in turn have contaminated some of the case samples. The samples to be tested arrive in the form of cotton swabs from a crime scene. The staff take every precaution against contamination. In the laboratory they may not wear watches or jewellery, and must wear disposable overalls, overshoes and gloves. Samples are handled with glassware that is used only once.

The preparation of samples for

final analysis by gas chromatograph (which identifies chemicals) would often use the centrifuge for purification. First, the swabs are soaked in a solvent, chosen to dissolve RDX or PETN. This mixture of liquid and solid is put in a test-tube and slotted into the centrifuge. Solids are separated from the liquid which is drawn off and re-used for testing.

The contamination found

yesterday was in one of eight rubber bungs which had the test-tubes. The bungs do not come into direct contact with samples. But after the accident, contamination was also found on the body of the centrifuge itself. This suggests some transfer of the

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# Heads step up protest over exam leagues

FRAN ABRAMS  
Education Correspondent

Local governors could face legal action as a result of a campaign by headteachers against league tables for 11-year-olds, it emerged last night.

The National Association of Head Teachers has called on governing bodies not to pass on this year's test results for use in league tables. Its general secretary, David Hart, said ministers had broken a promise not to publish tables until after the tests had been carried out for a third time next year. He described the decision to issue this year's marks next spring as political and claimed that the tests had not had enough time to settle in.

Primary schools in England would be castigated for poor performance unnecessarily, he said, while ministers in Wales had decided to stick to their original decision not to publish this year. He added that there had been flaws in last year's tests which still needed correcting and the tests still needed more time before they could be seen as reliable.

Mr Hart wants schools to carry out the tests and to pass on their results to parents but not to the Government. Headteachers would jeopardise their jobs if they refused to carry out their duties but governors were in a stronger position, he said. Although they would be breaking the law, he hoped neither ministers nor parents would take them to court.

The association, which represents headteachers in the majority of the 14,000 schools affected by tests for 11-year-olds, has advised its members to ask

their governing bodies to boycott the league tables.

Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education, had brought forward the publication so that it would take place before the next general election, Mr Hart said. "She had better take care in future before she rides rough-shod over teachers and heads in such a cavalier fashion," he added.

He was confident that governing bodies would take action, but the National Governors' Council was more reticent, saying only that some would do so.

Pat Petch, chair of the council, said: "Others will weigh this very carefully in the balance and decide that they have to comply with the law."

Mrs Shephard said the NAHT's advice to members not to break the law was welcome, despite its call to governors. "Parents and the wider public have a right to receive vitally important information about the performance of schools," she said.

About 600,000 11-year-olds are taking the tests in English, maths and science this week. Their papers will be marked externally and returned to schools for checking at the end of June. Governors must then pass them on to the Government by the end of July.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers, said of the heads' action: "It is outrageous double standards for heads to expect governing bodies to do their dirty work for them. If they want to ballot members to fight against league tables we will be right behind them."

## Labour threatens to kill divorce Bill

COLIN BROWN and  
PATRICIA WYNNE DAVIES

Labour is threatening to kill the Family Law Bill, on the grounds that it is a "mess" after a series of Government retreats in the face of stiff opposition by Tory MPs.

Some Labour MPs last night confirmed they were seriously considering voting against the Bill when it comes up for the third reading in the Commons, raising a strong risk for the Government that it could lose the legislation.

A clear hint that Labour will seek to kill the Bill is given by Paul Boateng, Labour's legal affairs spokesman, in the current edition of *House* magazine in the Commons.

Although Labour supported it on the second reading, Mr Boateng has made it clear he believes it is a "dog's breakfast". He says the Bill was exhibiting "all the hallmarks of another disaster in the making". He said: "The House has shown little enthusiasm for this Bill. The country still less shares its technocratic and Treasury-driven

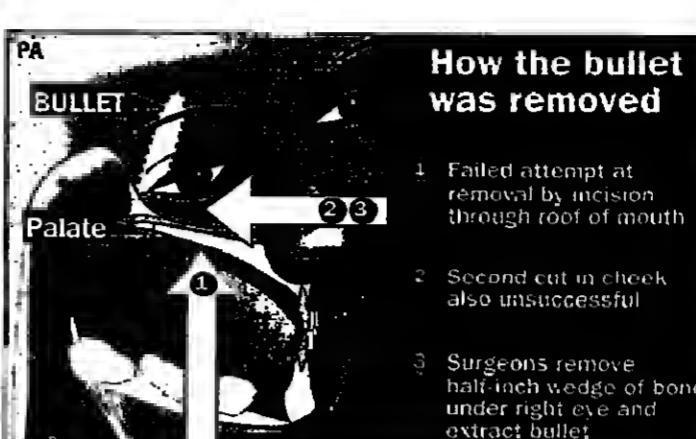
## Bullet 'time bomb' taken from orphan's head



Tennen Cole, whose parents died in civil war



X-ray showing location of bullet



How the bullet was removed

- 1 Failed attempt at removal by incision through roof of mouth
- 2 Second cut in cheek also unsuccessful
- 3 Surgeons remove half-inch wedge of bone under right eye and extract bullet



Narrow escape: The AK47 bullet taken from Tennen Cole's head; an X-ray shows its position. Photograph: Bryn Colton

"It was a hit like a time bomb," he said. "It could have gone off at any time."

Tennen was hit by a stray bullet 16 months ago during the civil war in Sierra Leone which claimed the lives of her parents.

She was found cowering in a derelict farmhouse by a couple also fleeing from the rebels. After she was wounded in the crossfire Malomoh Cole and his pregnant wife carried her 250

miles to the country's capital Freetown, dodging rebel patrols and begging for food.

There, a British couple, Colonel Mark Cook and his wife Caroline, who run a children's home in Sierra Leone, arranged for her to be brought to England and doctors at the Norfolk and Norwich agreed to treat her without charge.

Mr Cheeley said Tennen had been very lucky not to have been killed outright. "If that was a high velocity bullet and if it went into your head it would normally blow your face off," he said.

Doctors will monitor her progress over the next few days and also try to find out why she is deaf.

"From what we have been told her deafness was relatively recent and started after a small fever," said Mr Cheeley.

Mr Cheeley said Tennen's face was badly swollen after the

operation but when he had last seen her she was coming round and "gently complaining". She is back on a child's ward.

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progress over the next few days

and also try to find out why she is deaf.

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Mr Cheeley said Tennen's face was badly swollen after the

normal, happy child."

The new Norwegian owners of the QE2 are to have the Cunard flagship refitted in a British yard for the first time in a decade following the fiasco which beffel the vessel after its overhaul two years ago in Germany.

Kvaerner, which acquired Cunard earlier this year as part of its £900m takeover of the parent company Trafalgar House, yesterday announced that the £12m refit is to be carried out at the A&P Group's yard in Southampton.

In winning the contract, the British yard beat off a number of Continental rivals, including Blohm and Voss, the Bremen shipyard responsible for the ill-fated refit of 1994. On the QE2's first voyage after the refit, passengers complained of exploding toilets, unfinished cabins and blocked corridors. The fiasco cost the then Cunard chief executive John Olsen his job and Trafalgar House £3m in compensation.

Some parts of the ship that were refitted in 1994 are being overhauled again, Cunard said. One "amendment" will be to replace wooden flooring in the Lido, an informal dining area, with carpeting, after passengers complained about the noise.

The number of passenger berths is being reduced from 1,760 to 1,500, and the main Mauretania restaurant is being upgraded with new furnishings and new cuisine.

The refit in November will take 19 days and provide work for more than 1,000 fitters. The QE2 is scheduled to set sail again the day after the refit is completed on 11 December from Plymouth to Le Havre, and then to New York.

A spokesman said Cunard was confident it would not have a repeat of the nightmare in 1994, when hundreds of contractors were still on board carrying out remedial work when the QE2 set sail after her German refit.

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## news

# Gulf war mine victim wins £1m

ROS WYNNE-JONES

A former soldier who was blinded and lost a leg clearing Gulf war mines without any safety equipment yesterday won a compensation case estimated to be worth more than £1m.

The case opens the way for several more against Royal Ordnance, the subsidiary of British Aerospace, which had won a £60m contract from Kuwaiti to clear minefields laid by retreating Iraqis. Of the 110 people employed in clearing the mines, eight were killed and at least 13 seriously injured.

Paul Jefferson, 39, was blown up in Kuwait in 1991. Royal Ordnance had told Mr Jefferson, a former Royal Engineers captain, he "could get on the next plane home" if he refused to work without safety equipment, the High Court heard.

His compensation claim was halted yesterday after Royal Ordnance agreed to pay 75 per cent of his damages, with costs estimated at £500,000. Damages were estimated to be "substantially above £1m".

"As a soldier I expected to be expendable but I never expect-

ed to be expendable for profit," he said yesterday. Mr Jefferson, who was also lost a finger in the accident, said he would use some of the money for treatment. "But this is not a solo story. It is a moral victory against Royal Ordnance." His barrister, Andrew Hogarth, had told the court: "Had he been wearing protective goggles, he would have kept his sight."

No equipment or protective clothing was provided for the Royal Ordnance employees in the Gulf, Mr Hogarth said. Mr Jefferson and three other team members had been forced to try to dispose of Iraqi mines by attempting to set fire to them using "makeshift" apparatus including petrol in a Coca-Cola can. The unit was also expected to "scavenge" for equipment left by retreating enemy forces.

On one such operation, Mr Jefferson entered a mines dump, where he trod on a mine. The unit's first-aid equipment comprised "a few plasters and some aspirin" and it was three days before he was flown to Britain for treatment.

William Norris, for the defence, had argued that Mr Jefferson was a "cavalier operator" who took unnecessary risks. On Monday, the defence produced a picture of Mr Jefferson on a "minefield" in Afghanistan wearing no protective clothing. But this turned out to be a publicity photograph for a humanitarian organisation he had worked for, teaching local people to recognise and deal with mines. The photograph was posed "on a perfectly safe piece of road," he said.

Mr Jefferson said there had never been an accident on any of the previous mine-clearance missions he had been on, including work in Angola, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan.

St Dunstan's, a charitable organisation which works with blind people injured "in the course of their duty for the nation", contributed to Mr Jefferson's legal costs.

Before the Kuwait accident, Mr Jefferson had worked for three years as a freelance mine-disposal expert, earning about £60,000 a year. "It wasn't for the danger," he said yesterday. "It was something I was good at and I found it a satisfying occupation in problem-solving."



Paul Jefferson: Blinded and lost a leg clearing mines

Photograph: Dillon Bryden

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## Aspirin 'cure' for bowel cancer

GLENDA COOPER

Aspirin could have the potential to treat one of the most common cancers in westernised countries according to a leading cancer charity.

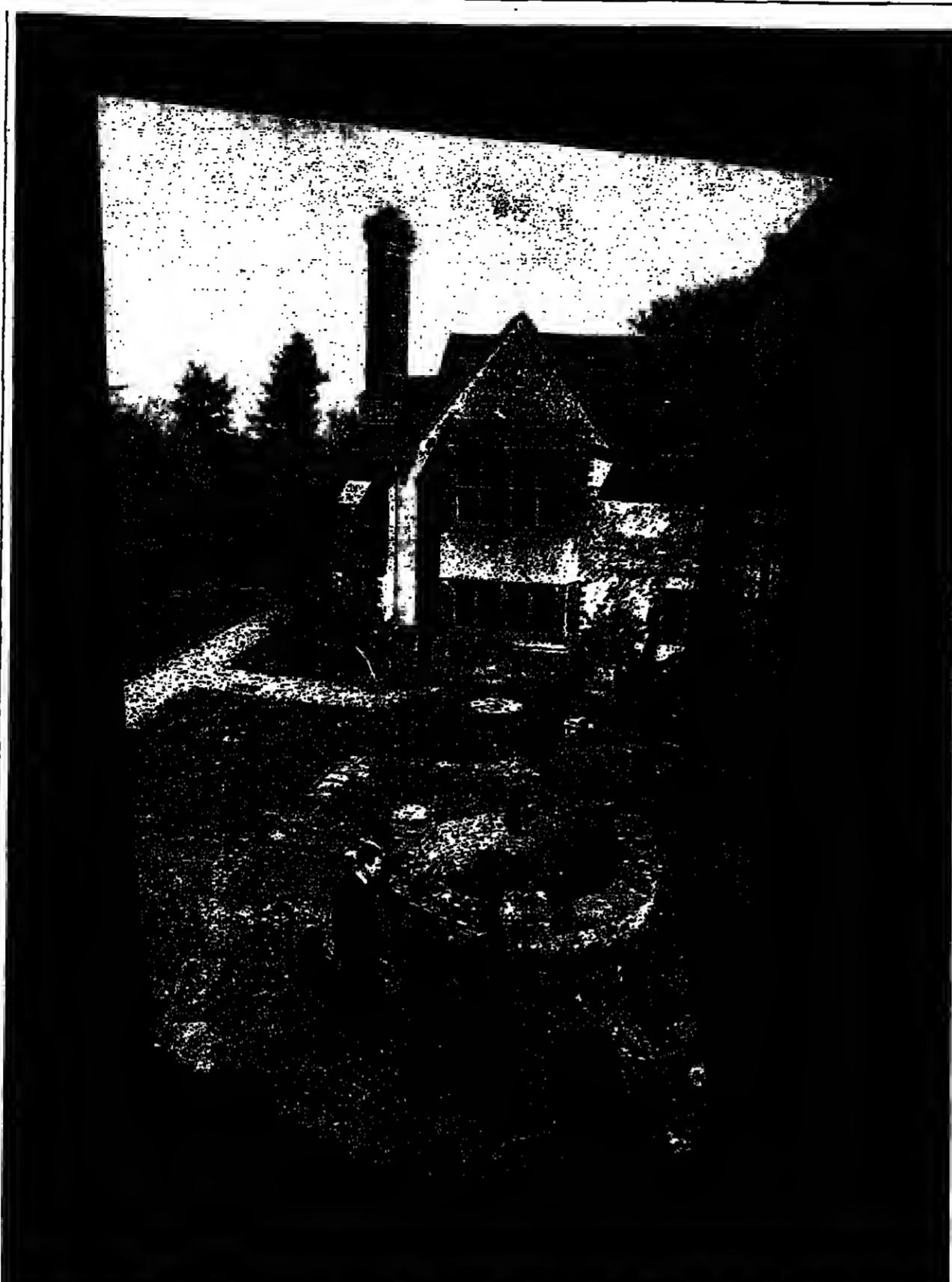
Laboratory tests carried out by the Cancer Research Campaign found that the household drug slowed down the growth of bowel cancer cells and caused some to self-destruct. Pre-cancer cells and cancerous cells were taken from the large bowel and cultivated in the laboratory. The results were published in the American-based journal *Cancer Research* yesterday. At present no human trials have been arranged.

"We already know that regular aspirin intake may reduce the risk of large bowel cancer by up to 50 per cent," said Professor Chris Paraskeva, who heads the CRC Colorectal Tumour Biology Research Group at the University of Bristol. "But the study now shows it might be possible to develop aspirin or aspirin-like compounds into anti-cancer drugs."

Cancer of the large bowel accounts for 19,000 deaths in the UK every year. It mainly affects people over 40 and the main form of treatment is pre-emptive surgery and occasionally chemotherapy.

The director general of the CRC, Professor Gordon McVie, said: "This is a significant step forward towards finding an eventual cure for cancer of the large bowel. It is also particularly important because there has been no significant fall in the death rate for patients with cancer of the large bowel for over 40 years."

Aspirin has already been proved to be efficacious for heart, attack and stroke victims, improving survival rates by as much as a quarter. But doctors warn that healthy people should not take aspirin simply as a precautionary measure as there is the possibility of rare side effects such as internal bleeding.



Window on the past: Margaret Richardson, chairman of the Lutyens Trust, hands over 'Goddards', near Dorking, Surrey, to Peter Pearce of the Landmark Trust. The trust, set up to rescue and restore buildings of historical and architectural importance, will eventually let the Victorian house as a holiday home

Photograph: Nicholas Turpin

## Thornton said: 'I have killed your father'

WILL BENNETT

The son of Malcolm Thornton yesterday described how he heard his father scream as he was stabbed to death by his wife Sara while he lay in a drunken stupor.

Martin Thornton said that he did not hear any argument before his stepmother stabbed his father with a kitchen knife in the living room of their home in Atherton, Warwickshire.

He told Oxford Crown Court: "I heard my father scream so I came downstairs and I got halfway down and Sara was standing at the bottom and she looked at me and just said, 'Martin, I have killed your father'."

Mr Thornton was giving evidence on the second day of the retrial of his stepmother which was ordered by the Court of Appeal. Mrs Thornton, 41, denies murdering her alcoholic husband in 1989. She says that she stabbed him accidentally after a row and that he regularly beat her up.

At the time of the killing

Martin Thornton, now 27, was living with his father and stepmother while he helped the former run a shop in Atherton.

Mr Thornton said yesterday that two days before the stabbing his stepmother threatened

Thornton went out for a drink with his stepmother. They left separately to avoid giving the impression that he was taking sides and he returned home before she did.

He said: "My father was lying on the couch fast asleep. I asked him if he wanted a cup of tea and there was no response so I left him asleep on the couch and went to bed."

"Sometime after that I heard the front door open. I automatically assumed that this was Sara returning home... She came up and opened my bedroom door and looked in. I did not acknowledge that she was there."

He said that he then heard somebody rummaging around in the cutlery drawer in the kitchen and then everything was quiet for a couple of minutes before he heard his father scream.

He added that when he went downstairs: "Sara said as I went into the lounge not to pull the knife out of him but it was already out and was lying between his legs on the floor."

The case continues.

## Officers 'harassed PC'

A woman police officer broke down yesterday as she told an industrial tribunal how a colleague suggested she should have sex with a glue-sniffer in the back of a police van.

Constable Karen Wade, 26, claimed she was sexually harassed by colleagues in the West Yorkshire Police Force. PC Wade, who is stationed at Holbeck, Leeds, described a string of incidents, including sexual comments, name-calling, and humiliation by colleagues.

The officer, who has been on sick leave suffering from stress since making an allegation of

sexual harassment against PC Dean Mountain, 30, and Sergeants Ian Devey, 32, and Paul Fountain, 30, of Leeds police, in July last year, told the hearing how, while on patrol in a police van in July, 1995, she and colleagues, including Sgt Fountain and PC Mountain, picked up a member of the public "high on glue". She said: "PC Mountain started making comments to the civilian, saying 'Have you ever done it with a woman?' Theo he said 'What about her?' ... referring to me. He kept on, saying 'Wouldn't you like to give her ooe?'"

PC Wade, who joined West Yorkshire Police in April 1992, told the Leeds tribunal of occasions when she felt embarrassed and humiliated by the officers.

She said comments started soon after she joined Holbeck station in August, 1994, when officers complained she was only selected for a CID placement "because I was a woman".

Matters came to a head at the end of July last year when PC Wade was diagnosed as suffering from hyperventilation and stress-related symptoms, and was signed off sick.

The case continues.

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news

# Britain's dirty beaches still fail test

## Seaside standards

■ How Europe's beaches compare for safe bathing ...				
Number of designated beaches	% reaching mandatory standard	% reaching guideline standard	% of beaches inadequately sampled	
Belgium 39	97.4	12.8	0	
Denmark 1188	95.6	83.5	0.2	
Germany 446	85	87.3	2.7	
Greece 1526	98	95.6	0.5	
Spain 1519	96.7	84.8	0.7	
France 1874	88.4	64.7	5.7	
Ireland 108	98.1	88.0	0	
Italy 4592	91.5	85.5	2.9	
Netherlands 46	65.2	41.3	30.4	
Portugal 333	91.6	81.7	2.4	
Britain 464	89	49.6	0	
Finland 100	73	61	25	
Sweden 252	44.8	33.3	54.4	

NICHOLAS SCHOON  
Environment Correspondent

Seawage pollution of Britain's beaches may be declining, but the United Kingdom compares poorly with the rest of Europe, figures released in Brussels yesterday reveal.

Despite having one of the continent's longer coastlines, the UK designates and monitors pollution on a much smaller number of beaches than Italy, Spain, Greece, Denmark and France.

But the dirty man of Europe in this domain is the newcomer to the European Union, Sweden, usually among the most progressive on environmental issues. They have the most polluted beaches and the worst monitoring record.

Publishing figures for compliance with the EU's bathing water directive yesterday, the environmental commissioner Ritt Bjerregaard was deeply

disappointed that 3,000 designated beaches in the union — one in 13 — still failed to meet the legal, mandatory standard 10 years after it should have come into force.

"I am not prepared to let the matter rest," she said. "I intend to keep pressure up on the member states to ensure that the directive is fully applied."

In Britain, 89 per cent of our 464 designated beaches met the mandatory standard for sewage bacteria last summer — slightly below the average of 92.5 but a marked improvement on the 80 per cent pass rate in 1993.

Seven nations scored higher but the UK beat Germany and France. Ireland claimed the cleanest beaches of all.

On the more stringent, guideline standards for sewage bacteria, Britain performed much worse. Just under half of UK beaches achieved them, compared with a community average of 80 per cent. Sweden,

the Netherlands and Belgium came lower than Britain.

Italy designates and monitors 10 times as many beaches as Britain, which covers about the same number as Germany. But the commission's figures show that Britain's monitoring is sec-

ond to none with none of our 464 designated beaches failing to provide sufficient data.

The EU depends on the member states for the reliability of the data. "We have to believe them until we have proof to the contrary," said an official.

Several member states including Britain have been prosecuted in the European Court for failing to comply with the directive.

The commission is insisting that Italy, Spain, Germany and France present plans to bring all their beaches up to the mandatory standards.

Britain had promised that almost all UK beaches would comply by this year. An expensive programme of improving coastal sewage works was accelerated, adding to water bills. Blackpool, which has always failed, should come up to scratch this summer after completion of a £150m scheme. But a few other designated beaches around the coast will continue to routinely fail the directive's mandatory standard for several years to come.

**Dirty business:** Beaches such as Frinton-on-sea, Essex, are getting cleaner but still lag those in Italy and other EU states. Photograph: Brian Harris

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## Whistleblower saved company £40m loss

NICHOLAS TIMMINS  
Public Policy Editor

A whistleblower who exposed a £1m-a-year waste disposal fraud prevented the loss of a £40m investment and hundreds of jobs in Britain, the whistleblower's charity said yesterday.

Public Concern at Work said the case highlights the need for a whistleblower's Bill, which is due to return to the Commons in July when the Government will have to decide whether to try to vote it down or not.

Ministers have not acted to block it — while making clear their opposition despite the widespread cross-party support the Public Interest Disclosure Bill enjoys.

In the waste disposal case, an employee of a food wholesaler realised his firm was supplying rotten meat to supermarkets. He informed the supermarkets who found the allegations true. The employee was sacked, later winning compensation and a job with a local competitor who, the charity said, "saw the benefits of having someone on the staff who was prepared to look after the interests of its customers".

The examples are from more than 300 involving serious malpractice at work which the charity says it dealt with during its second year and which it argues reinforce the case for the Private Member's Bill sponsored

by the Labour MP Doo Toulou.

It would protect whistleblowers from unfair dismissal and punishment, providing they have raised their concerns internally first and with the relevant regulatory authorities. Whistleblowers would have to establish that they acted in the public interest and would not be protected if they attempted to profit from their actions.

Guy Dehn, the charity's director, said "good businesses welcome whistleblowers", as evidenced by support for the Bill from the Institute of Directors and big companies such as Cadbury Schweppes, Esso and the National Westminster Bank.

But, he added: "Without legal protection for whistleblowers, responsible firms will continue to be ripped off by rogue operators, and public safety will be endangered."

□ *Public Concern at Work, Second Annual Report, 42 Kingsway, London WC2B 6EN. £5. Helpline 0171-404-6609.*

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## DIARY OF A SURVIVOR AGED 8 1/2

**February** I don't know why I am here. I think my Papa sold me to the boss to learn a trade and now the boss says I must do exactly what he tells me.

**March** It's the same every day. We go from our beds to the loom at six. No-one must talk. We tie tiny knots all day, the smallest ones on the carpet because we have small fingers. Work, work, work. My fingers crack and weep and sometimes my eyes get all blurred. We get a cup of dahl and half an hour to rest then go back to the loom till night time. There is no more food. We are too tired to play.

**April** Paro talked today and the boss lashed her with the cane. He shouted at us "if you children speak you are not giving your whole attention to the product."

**May** My fingers bled again and the boss got angry with me for getting blood on the loom. He says I will work extra hours for the next two days and I will be fined and that will increase my father's debt to him. I cried when he talked about Papa.

**June** The boy who lost a hand, poor Rangilal, he fainted today. We begged the boss to open the window. "The mud walls are hot sir. The thermometer says 105 sir." But the window stays shut to keep out the insects that eat the wool.

**July** Not much light gets through the polythene slats in the roof. It's hard to see the pattern. I made mistakes today and I'm frightened what will happen when the boss finds out.

**August** In bed tonight, Nageshwar told me his plan to escape. He is brave but he is bigger than me. He said we live worse

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# Labour backs Brown plan to cut youth dole

JOHN RENTOU  
Political Correspondent

The Labour leadership is to rally round Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, in a show of unity today in defence of his controversial plans to cut the dole for young people who refuse training places and to withdraw child benefit from the parents of 16-18-year-old students.

Tony Blair, the Labour leader, and shadow Cabinet members David Blunkett, Jack Straw and Chris Smith, will join Mr Brown on the platform this morning to launch a £1.6bn "New Deal for the Lost Generation," combining training and work schemes.

Mr Brown's plan to cut income support for under-25s if they refuse work or training places split the shadow Cabinet when he floated it in November. It has been under fire at all levels of the Labour Party.



Brown: Plan to reduce benefits split the party

A document to be considered at a policy-making forum in Manchester at the weekend will not endorse the policy explicitly, but will say the young unemployed have a "responsibility" to seek work or take up the other options a Labour government would provide, including training, voluntary work

and work on a green clean-up task force. These schemes would all pay extra, on top of benefits. And it concludes that the package will ensure that "prolonged spells on benefit are not an option".

It also contains a commitment to review child benefit for 16-18-year-olds as part of a review of public funding for education and training. Mr Brown is expected today to repeat his insistence that Labour must make "tough choices" over the allocation of resources.

He will be backed by Stephen Byers, Labour's spokesman on training, who has published a new analysis of official figures which show fewer than half of households with 16-18-year-olds gain from child benefit.

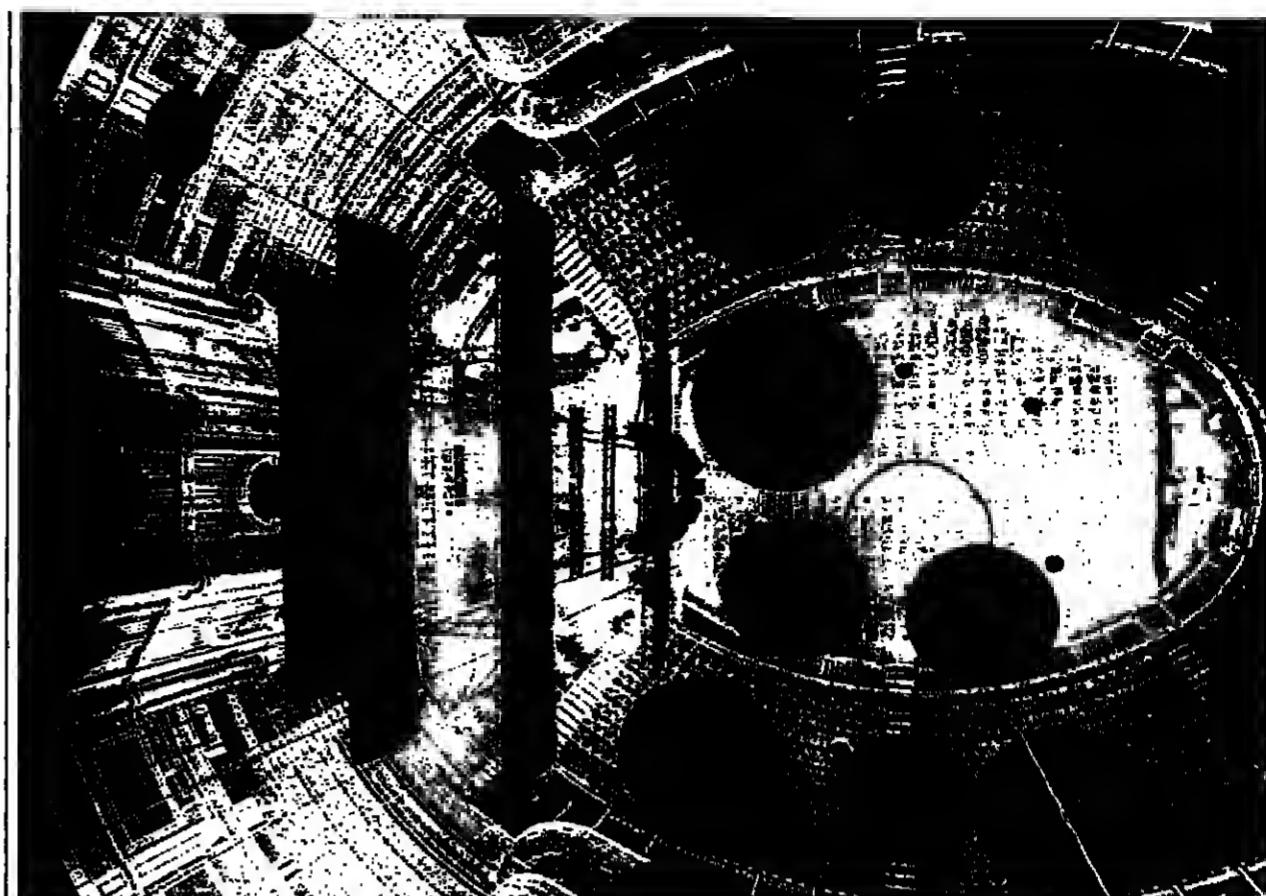
The benefit is paid only to mothers of 16-18s in full-time education and is deducted from the income of the 11 per cent of households on social security benefits.

The document on which today's launch is based was approved last week by the powerful joint policy committee of the shadow Cabinet and National Executive. It is expected to come under attack from party activists in Manchester on Saturday.

Chris Smith, Labour's social security spokesman, has been added to today's line-up to demonstrate shadow Cabinet unity, in the wake of a struggle in which Mr Brown blocked his wider-ranging policy paper on incentives to move people from "welfare into work".

This substantial paper, which has already been drafted, will not now be considered by the Manchester policy forum.

Party insiders doubt a version will be included in Labour's pre-election manifesto, which is due to be drafted in June, put to the party conference in October and then put to a ballot of party members in December.



Centrestage: The Royal Albert Hall was the focus of a row as its chief executive, Patrick Deuchar, accused the Department of National Heritage of "leaking" details of a £40m National Lottery cash grant. Photograph: Dillon Bryden

## Successors fail to excite Mellor

MARIANNE MACDONALD  
Arts Correspondent

David Mellor, the first Secretary of State for National Heritage, was yesterday called to give judgement on his successors – and his verdict suggested their performances were resoundingly mediocre.

Mr Mellor, now a broadcaster and presenter as well as an MP, was unseated from the Cabinet in 1992.

Since then there have been three heritage secretaries in almost as many years, including Stephen Dorrell, now Secretary of State for Health, who was widely perceived as uninterested in the job, and Virginia Bottomley, the incumbent.

In an apparent reference to Mr Dorrell – who, when asked, had not been able to remember the last film he had seen – Mr Mellor warned the National Heritage Select Committee that the post of heritage secretary required genuine interest in the issues.

"You have got to believe that cultural values matter. They're not just a spray-on addition to cultural table talk. Nobody remembers all the emperors Mozart had to slave for, but they remember Mozart," Mr Mellor continued.

"Parliament should have taken the lead with the millennium. When I see some of the schemes [which have won lottery funding] I wonder which millennium they think they are aiming for."

## Dobson attacks wrongdoers of Westminster

The Conservative Party has sunk so low in the affair of Westminster City Council it reversed the moral stricture from the Book of Psalms which is set above the door of the Old Bailey, the Commons was told yesterday.

In a graphic conclusion to his denunciation of all concerned, from 10 Downing Street through Dame Shirley Porter to council officials in the "homes-for-votes" scandal, Frank Dobson said the Tories were "beyond redemption". Above the door at the Old Bailey were the words: "Defend the children of the poor and punish the wrongdoers", the Labour environment spokesman said.

The Tories have reversed these ancient laws that should guide the conduct of mankind. The Tories now defend the wrongdoers who punished the children of the poor."

Homeless families, mostly single mothers with children, were high among the victims of the council's efforts to rig the electorate in eight marginal Westminster wards, he said.

Labour's motion for what proved to be a noisy, political-knockabout of a debate, called on the Government to condemn the "malpractice on an unprecedented scale" revealed last week in the report of the

Inside Parliament  
Stephen Goodwin

district auditor, John Magill. Dame Shirley, the former leader of the council, and five colleagues were ordered to repay £31.6m of public money. Failure to condemn the gerrymandering would be regarded as "further evidence of electorally-motivated support for the council," the motion stated.

The people John Gummer, Secretary of State for the Environment, was keenest to condemn were Mr Dobson and those Opposition MPs prepared to accept the findings of the district auditor.

The Suncharged Six lodged a notice of appeal on Monday. "It would not be right, proper or decent to condemn people until the court have had their say," Mr Gummer insisted.

Mr Dobson wondered how long the restraint of Mr Gummer and the Prime Minister could last. "When is an outcome not an outcome? Dame Porter is a very wealthy woman. She can afford to keep on appealing and appealing," he said. "When will Mr Gummer condemn?"

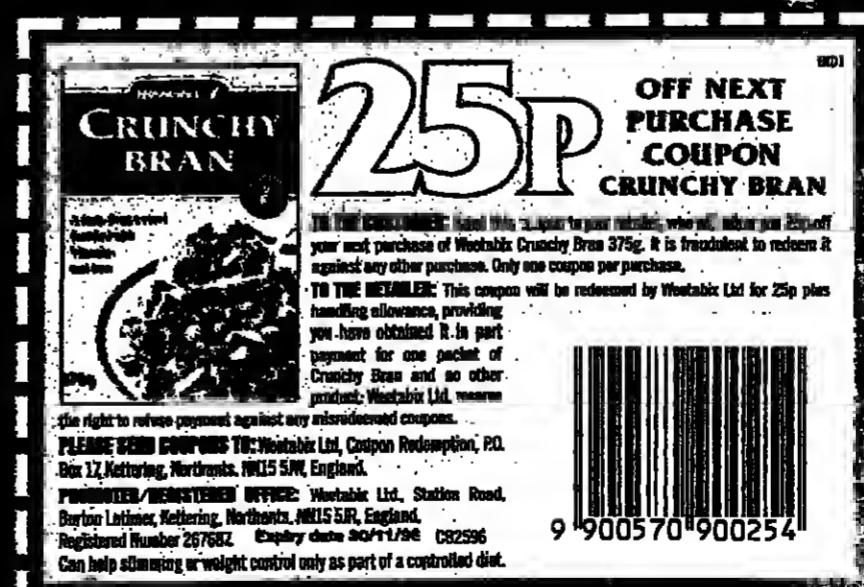
Labour and Tory Eurosceptics made common cause in backing a Bill to scrap the EU fisheries policy and impose a 200-mile territorial limit for British waters.

The Fishery Limits (Amendment) Bill, introduced by Austin Mitchell, MP for Great Grimsby, with the support of more Tories than fellow Labour members, gained its formal first reading without a vote.

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General election: 'Neglected' Jews from the former Soviet Union back human-rights hero

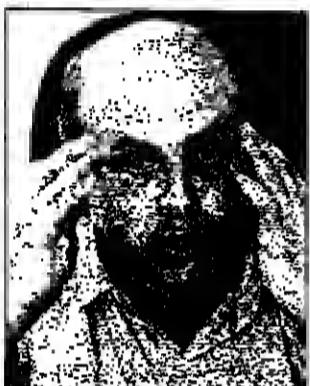
## Israel's Russians look to their own

ERIC SILVER  
Jerusalem

When Anna Dobroborsky writes to friends in Moldova, she keeps quiet about her job. Before emigrating to Israel in 1991, she was a senior engineer in a factory; in Jerusalem, she cleans floors.

In the 1992 election, she and her tailor husband, Lazar, did not vote. "We still didn't understand what was going on here," she said. "We had been political activists in the Soviet Union. We believed you should vote responsibly, for something you knew about." Anna is 55; Lazar 60. She works full-time; he has a part-time job. Together they earn 4,000 shekels (£800) a month.

Home is a caravan, for which they pay a nominal rent of 20



Sharansky: Capitalising on newcomers' grievances

shekels a month. They see no prospect of buying a flat, even with a subsidised mortgage. Neither the government nor the council has rented housing to offer. If they could turn back the clock, the couple admitted, they would not have left Moldova. "The only way to deal with the fact that a chief engineer is working as a cleaner," said Anna, "is not to think about it."

This time, the Dobroborskys will vote. "Now," said Lazar, "we understand what life is like here." They will vote on 29 May for a new Russian immigrants' party led by the Gulag graduate Natan Sharansky, and for the right-wing Likud leader, Binyamin Netanyahu, in the separate ballot for Prime Minister. "We are disappointed with the Labour government," Anna said. "They never did anything for us. Russian immi-

grants have been humiliated. We want people in parliament who know our problems and want to do something about them."

If most of the 400,000 ex-Soviet immigrant voters who have settled in Israel since 1989 followed their example, they could overthrow Shimon Peres's centre-left coalition. The Russians account for about 10 per cent of the electorate in a tight race. In 1992 a majority of the newcomers voted Labour to punish a Likud government for "neglecting" them. Four years later, many are equally disenchanted with Labour. They seem, however, to be taking it out on the party rather than its leader.

A recent poll found 37.9 per cent of the immigrants backing Mr Sharansky, to 23.7 for Likud and 20.9 for Labour. Yet Mr Peres led Mr Netanyahu by 10 per cent for Prime Minister, with 9 per cent undecided. Mr Netanyahu has yet to convince the newcomers he would do a better job. "With Sharansky I feel I can influence things," said Boris, an engineer. "But I don't see anybody to choose from for Prime Minister."

Segei Makarov, 56, an ex-Moscow science writer who now earns his living as a translator, night watchman and occasional furniture-van driver, said: "Peres is much closer to me. He's more intelligent, more European. I'd like him to be stronger, more careful, in the peace talks, but I'm not against a Palestinian state."

"Netanyahu is too aggressive for me ... To handle the intricate situation we're in, you need wisdom and vision." So Mr Peres wins his vote for Prime Minister but he is backing Mr Sharansky for the Knesset. If the polls are right, the former human-rights hero could take four seats in the 120-seat chamber.

Mr Sharansky said: "We didn't form this party to get into government ... but as a magnet that attracts Jews by its quality of life ... and civil rights. We want immigrants to be able to use their talents and compete so that more will want to come."

He would, however, negotiate with either Mr Peres or Mr Netanyahu. "Whoever wins the election," said Haim Ramon, Labour's campaign director, "Sharansky will be a minister."

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Minority issue: Russian immigrants accuse the Labour party of doing nothing for them

Photograph: Rex Features

## international

### Ghana admits boat refugees

VINCENT TSAS  
Reuters

Ghana agreed yesterday to take about 3,000 Liberian war refugees who spent 10 days as outcasts sailing the West African coast in a battered freighter.

"Ghana believes that these innocent civilians should not be made to suffer any more for the failure of their political and faction leaders to reach a peaceful solution of their differences," said the deputy foreign minister, Mohamed Ibn Chedid.

The Nigerian cargo ship *Bulk Challenge* left the Liberian capital, Monrovia, on 5 May and had already docked twice at the Ghanaian port of Takoradi before yesterday's decision. Food and water were in short supply and three people on board had died.

In Geneva, the United Nations High Commission on Refugees said Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings had agreed to take the refugees.

"Ghanaian authorities are requesting UN assistance to care for the refugees. We're standing by ready to help as we said we would be," said UNHCR spokesman Ron Redmond.

An eruption of heavy fighting shattered two days of relative calm in Monrovia yesterday, one day after handshakes and professions of peace between rival gunmen.

The US embassy, which is protected by marines, advised its staff to move around the scorpion compound with extreme caution after fighting moved towards it.

Witnesses said shooting began before dawn after fighters loyal to the dominant faction leaders, Charles Taylor and Alhaji Kromah, advanced towards ethnic Krahn rivals in and around the Barelay Training Centre barracks.

Battles between the two sides since 6 April have shattered a 1995 accord on ending a six-year civil war and triggered an exodus of refugees.

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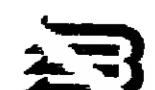
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# obituaries/gazette

## Nnamdi Azikiwe

Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owerri of Onitsha, popularly known as "Zik" or "Zik of Africa", was the first president of Nigeria. He made his name in the 1930s when he returned to Nigeria after studying in the United States and became a messianic figure in the nationalist movement while working in journalism, commerce and politics. Nigeria's achievement of independence from Britain was so dear to his heart that he once described it as "the consummation of my life's work".

Azikiwe's passion and struggle for the independence of African nations, which were not restricted to Nigeria, were inspired by a lecture given by the Rev Dr J.E. Kwegn Aggrey in 1924, which made him determined to study in the United States. He was working as a clerk after leaving school, but through his friendship with sailors on the cargo boats at the Port of Lagos, managed to stow away on a boat. He was discovered and put off at Accra, in the Gold Coast - present-day Ghana - where after wandering around aimlessly for some time he served in the Police Force as a constable. The following year, 1925, he returned to Nigeria and pleaded with his father for money to travel; his father gave him £300, all he could raise.

Azikiwe's father was a member of the clerical staff of the British administrator, Sir Frederick Lugard, and Noamdi was educated at Christian mission schools - Roman Catholic and Anglican primary schools in Onitsha, and the Wesleyan Boys' High School in Lagos.

He spent nine years studying (and then teaching) in the United States, first at Lincoln University, Pennsylvania and then at the University of

Pennsylvania. He graduated in philosophy and anthropology. In order to pay his way he took on odd jobs as a lift operator, miner and dishwasher. In 1934 Lincoln University instituted a professorial chair in his honour.

After America, Azikiwe went to the Gold Coast as a propagandist for the nationalist cause. The late Kwame Nkrumah, who later became the president of Ghana, was one of his pupils. Azikiwe also edited the *African Morning Post* in Accra from 1934 to 1937.

On his return to Nigeria

Azikiwe continued in journalism, editing the *West African Pilot* (1937-45), launching five newspapers and writing regular columns to stir up nationalism in Nigeria and along the West African coast. By 1944 he had become the president of the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), a post he held for the next two years.

The NCNC was a political party which united radical elements that had emerged during the Second World War. In 1960 Nigeria became independent from Britain. Azikiwe was appointed Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Federal State of Nigeria. Three years later he was the first Nigerian to be sworn in as president, when the country became a republic. He held this position until the first *coup d'état* in 1966 ended his administration and led to the Nigerian civil war. This started in June 1966 when the Ibo in the east of Nigeria seceded to set up the State of Biafra under Col. Emenike Odumegu Ojukwu. When the coup happened Azikiwe was in Britain, which made people suspect that he knew about it.

Nnamdi Azikiwe was a strong

This he denied, but he did at first support Ojukwu.

The 30-month civil war

caused the death of about a million people, many of whom died from starvation. It was not long before Azikiwe, himself an Ibo, saw the hopelessness of the war and helped bring it to an end by returning to the federal side. The Biafran leadership denounced him, and it seemed that Azikiwe's political career was at an end. However, the Ibo had such admiration for him that when the army lifted the ban on party politics in 1979, he re-emerged as their most popular figure.

Nnamdi Azikiwe's Nigerian

People's Party (NPP) came third

in the polls for the 1979 election

, which was won by the National Party of Nigeria (NPN)

under the leadership of Shehu Shagari. Azikiwe took his party into an alliance with Shagari, thereby obtaining plum jobs for his NPP members. The alliance came to an end a few years later, however, when he asked for more than Shagari was prepared to give.

Azikiwe was christened Benjamin, but in 1934, when he applied to compete for Nigeria in the British Empire Games was barred after protests from the South African team. Shocked by this display of colour prejudice, Azikiwe decided to give up the name of Benjamin and instead changed it legally to Nnamdi.

He was a fine orator, and had the advantage of speaking the three major languages of Nigeria Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba. As a child he spoke Hausa, from the age of eight he learned Ibo who the family moved to the east, and later as a student in Lagos he learnt to speak Yoruba fluently.

Nnamdi Azikiwe was a strong

influence in democracy, the welfare state and the rule of law. Emenike Ojukwu, the leader of the Ibo state of Biafra, once said that he had secured "a good place in history by arousing West Africa and thereby African blacks to seek independence". However, Ojukwu also felt that Zik had not carried on with this mission up to the end.

However Zik's efficacious charm, his position as the father

of Nigerian nationalism and his political astuteness are three outstanding qualities that his opponents cannot argue about. His wife, Flora Ogbenyema Ogobagun, a daughter of the Adara of Onitsha, died in 1983, since when he withdrew into seclusion.

R. Akintimé Oyéché

Benjamin (Nnamdi) Azikiwe, politician and journalist, born

Zungeru, Northern Nigeria 16 November 1904; Premier, Eastern Nigeria 1954-59; PC, 1960; President, Federal Senate 1960; Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, Federation of Nigeria 1963-66; Leader, Nigeria People's Party 1979-96; married 1956 Flora Ogbenyema Ogobagun (died 1983, three sons, one daughter); died Enugu, Eastern Nigeria 11 May 1996.

Photograph: Keystone

Zik of Africa: the father of Nigerian nationalism

Zik of Africa: the father of Nigerian nationalism

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Photograph: Keystone

## Bruce Boyce



Boyce: Lieder singer

Photograph: Hulton Getty

llich in Salzburg, then came to London and sang with the Oriana Madrigal Society and the Bach Cantata Club. He made his solo debut in 1936 at a concert in London, and the following year sang in the *St Matthew Passion* at Queen's Hall.

Returning to America, in 1938 Boyce gave a concert at Carnegie Hall, New York, and in 1940 was drafted into the United States Army, where he served with distinction during the Second World War, being twice decorated. On his discharge from the army he went back to London to study further with the Italian tenor Dino Borgoli.

Borgoli was at that time artistic director of the New London Opera Company, promoted popular operas for two years at the Cambridge Theatre; here Boyce made his operatic debut in 1947 as Monterone in *Rigoletto*. This was

shortly followed by the title role of Don Giovanni and Marcello in *La Bohème*, both characters that suited him very well. Although a newcomer to opera, he had experience both as a man and a musician, that gave him great authority on stage.

With the English Opera Group in 1951 Boyce sang Mr Gedge the Vicar in *Albeni's Herring*, and Aeneas in a new realisation by Benjamin Britten of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, first given at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, then toured to the Holland and Cheltenham Festivals, and to Liverpool. His portrayal of Mr Gedge, smooth and unctuous, was particularly successful. The following year he sang four performances of the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro*, conducted by Erich Kleiber, at Covent Garden. Boyce's Count, like his Don Giovanni, was notable for a commanding presence and for musicality with which the singer shaped Mozart's vocal lines.

Boyce continued to appear occasionally in opera, mainly in club or society performances before he died in 1977.

Boyce made many recordings, including Mendelssohn's *Ellijah* under Josef Krips and the *St Matthew Passion*, in which he sang Christus, conducted by Piet van Eegmont. He also recorded Lieder by Schubert, Brahms and Wolf.

He began to teach singing at the Academy of Music during the late 1950s, when one of his pupils was the tenor Philip Langridge. He then left the Academy for some years, returning there from 1977 to 1984, when the pianist for his lessons was invariably Michael Hall. In 1985 he finally retired, moving to Provence. His final years were spent at Bishop Auckland in County Durham.

Elizabeth Forbes

John Bruce McLaren (Bruce Boyce), singer, born London, Ontario 2 September 1910; died Bishop Auckland, Co Durham 11 May 1996.

Photograph: Hulton Getty

## Stanley Reed

Although Stanley Reed had long retired as director of the British Film Institute, his death marks yet another loss to the world of cinema, following as it does so soon after those of the critic John Gillett, the film historians Bill Everso and David Shipman and the former owner of the Academy Cinema, Ivo Jarosy. Like them Reed had a passionate, lifelong commitment to film, notably to the educational and cultural aspects of the medium.

He began his working life as a teacher, aged 21, in the East End of London, where he had been born and continued to live all his life, despite the surrounding gentrification of the area, which doubtless did not appeal to his leftist principles. The son of a printer, he went to Stratford Grammar School on a scholarship. He later took a degree in English at the College of St Mark and St John,

Chelsea, and qualified as a teacher. It was after the Second World War - during which period he worked with schools' evacuation - that he became first the visual AIDS Officer for West Ham and subsequently joined the British Film Institute as their inaugurator Education Officer. This was during a period of comparative austerity and for a while the BFI remained a small, friendly organisation housed modestly in buildings around the Soho area of London.

Although money was tight, Reed and others began the oddly-titled Experimental Film Fund, which helped aspiring film-makers including Tony Richardson, Karel Reisz, Jack Gold and Kevin Brownlow. At this stage the involvement was in short films. Years later Reed appeared in Brownlow's 1975 feature film *Winstanley*, as a rather uneasy Recorder.

After a period as Education Officer, Reed began a stint as Secretary to the BFI and in 1964 was appointed its Director. The BFI was expanding during this period and moved from Shafesbury Avenue to Dean Street, to Waterloo and elsewhere. The change from a distinctly family atmosphere was well under way. But Reed never became grandiose and the BFI under his guidance retained its remit to encourage the art of the cinema. Only in recent years has bureaucracy and egomaniacal sabotage sabotaged this role.

During Reed's directorship, the Film Fund blossomed and developed into the BFI Production Board under Mamoun Hassan and Reed's protégé Bruce Beresford. And in 1970 the gleam in the eye of the National Film Theatre's controller, Leslie Hardcastle, became a reality with the opening of a sec-

ond auditorium there, to which I was appointed programme planner. This was after three strenuous years working directly to Reed, as the BFI's first press officer. He had a rather strict view of the BFI's role and eschewed the glossier aspects of PR. He was most concerned about the choice, for example, of the opening programme for NFT2 lest it be too frivolous, and he always made the final decision about the opening film for the London Film Festival. He worked tirelessly for the BFI including on Sundays, when he would regularly attend the John Player Lectures at the NFT and host lunches for the myriad stars and directors involved.

When, in 1972, he retired from the directorship of the BFI, it was partly on grounds of a heart condition, but he soon became immersed in the expansion programme for regional film theatres. For four

years he worked with others to open the network of regional film theatres which he believed to be the cornerstone of the BFI's work.

He finally relinquished this consultancy and retired to his garden and workshop at his house in Wanstead, east London. He continued lifelong interests in photography and reading.

It was at school, aged 11, that he had met Alicia Chapman, who in 1937 became his wife, and they shared a life together that ran happily in tandem with Reed's demanding career and their shared love of cinema and the arts. He and Alicia never ceased to be part of the consciousness of those who had met and worked with them.

Stanley Reed was a man of

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He finally relinquished this consultancy and retired to his garden and workshop at his house in Wanstead, east London. He continued lifelong interests in photography and reading.

It was at school, aged 11, that he had met Alicia Chapman, who in 1937 became his wife, and they shared a life together that ran happily in tandem with Reed's demanding career and their shared love of cinema and the arts. He and Alicia never ceased to be part of the consciousness of those who had met and worked with them.

The taxpayer has been pouring money into a hole in the ground at the new British Library, as Chris Blackhurst reports

## Britain's books: long overdue

### Sprinklers

In the Seventies, when the design brief was drawn up, the library authorities were reluctant to have fire sprinklers in the building because they were afraid of the damage that could be caused to books if they went off accidentally. But the Department of the Environment and Greater London Council both insisted on a fire protection system, so "dry" sprinklers, where water does not enter the pipes until fire is detected (as opposed to "wet" where water remains permanently in the piping), were introduced.

A consultant hired by the Government advised that the system was flawed because too much emphasis was being placed on accidental damage to books rather than the fears of fire. The volume of water was not great enough to put out a fire in the large storage areas and it was complex to use. There was a risk that the fire would not be extinguished in time. The "dry" system was converted to a "wet" system, and quicker-response sprinklers and better pumps and valves were ordered to be installed.

July 1994 was not a good month for ministers and officials at the Department of Environment. They had a highly embarrassing problem: the new British Library, the prestige project upon which £450m of taxpayers' money had been lavished was still nowhere near being completed after 12 years' building work.

The project had got into such a mess of delays and cost-overruns that they were prepared to consider radical solutions: to abandon it and leave only the half finished building next to London's St Pancras station. The option was dismissed as "not cost effective" according to a damning National Audit Office report published yesterday. Yet the fact that ministers and senior civil servants were prepared even to countenance such a step is a measure of how badly wrong the building has gone.

Instead, it was agreed that the taxpayer should stump up an extra £7.5m to solve the immediate faults. In November that year the treasury came up with a new budget of £496m to allow the building to be finished. All being well – something of a rarity in the new library's history – the building which was first planned in the 1970s will open in November next year.

Driving along the Euston Road, past St Pancras, it is difficult to see what the fuss is about. That is because the red-brick building, with its much disliked bright metallic trimmings, that lies on the surface is only part of the structure. Like a giant iceberg, the bulk of the library – and its problems – lie far below the surface in the underground storage areas where most of the books will be kept.

The catalogue of mistakes and misjudgements that have bedevilled the project are impressive even by the standards of other large projects

### Shelving

A prototype mechanical shelving system was developed in 1988 to test how quickly and efficiently books could be moved from the basement storage areas to the reading rooms. The shelving system was a basement unit holding 10,000 books. It had a central aisle with the books stacked either side. When the shelves moved, the books would roll, falling backwards and forwards. This fault was corrected, alas, just as the basement areas were being handed over. The original mechanical system, however, had to be dismantled and replaced by a new one.

that have over-run like the recent additions to Lord's cricket ground and the Channel tunnel.

Former site workers speak in awestruck terms of the things they have seen and been asked to do. Yards of tiles were brought down because one was out of line – "by the width of a five pence piece", said a site engineer. Hand-made bricks that did not quite meet the exacting quality standards received the same "treatment". Miles of electrical cables were ripped out because their outer casings were the wrong colour – even though they would eventually be housed in boxes and not seen.

A hundred cabling boxes costing £1,000 each were bought, found to be unnecessary and were eventually tucked away under the floorboards.

A ceiling was ordered to be remade after a quality checker noticed a piece of insulation tape hanging down.

The £400,000 corridor linking the book loading bay and the library was replaced because the mortar did not exactly match the design specification. About 27,000 slates were ordered for the roof and rejected because the quality control team was not happy with their natural markings. That meant someone had to sort through another 100,000 slates.

The fire sprinklers needed revamping when it was found the pipes had corroded and, if a blaze were to have erupted in the basement where most of the books will be stored, they would not have been powerful enough to put it out. On the four basement floors, the

mechanical shelving system, has proved to be a nightmare in itself (see box above).

The reasons for this débâcle are harder to fathom. The library is a large and complex project. The people in charge of designing and building it understandably want a structure that will be of the highest quality: this building should make a statement about the quality of British learning and culture. It

needs to last. Although its exterior has been widely criticised, its interior is lavish and striking.

Yet this desire to build the very best has fallen foul of sometimes gross mismanagement. For instance, one sub-contractor in his twenties has boasted of having made enough from supplying 250 electricians to be able to retire of the proceeds.

Yet the construction companies and workers who have swarmed over the site are merely exploiting a payment system designed by the government. When building work started, back in 1982, ministers decided the project should follow

give it more control and flexibility.

The system has turned into a nightmare. The first problem was that there was little expertise in operating it. As the NAO report says: "There was little experience in the UK building industry and even less in central government of the 'construction management' approach."

Costs increased as the project went along. Power was delegated by Whitehall to the project director and his superintending officer. As problems arose, they

waved them through. This system of "reactive budgeting", notes the NAO, left the department in a difficult position to challenge their decisions.

Fatally, this rarely-followed approach was accompanied by a lack of systematic quality control. These were, says the NAO, "inadequate prior to 1991". Checks on the quality of the work as it progressed were

not good enough. As a result, problems only emerged once the job had been completed and the money had been handed over. By then, it was too late.

The recipe for disaster was finished off by the library managers' desire to construct a building of a standard well above the public norm, and an absence of incentives for getting the job done on time. The managers spotted faults that in many such projects would be ignored. The price carried on spiralling.

One group that will benefit greatly from the débâcle will be lawyers, who will be kept busy by a string of disputes over contractual claims and counter claims. Readers will be marginally better off. The new building will only bump up their number by between 10 and 19 per cent. The capacity of the new science and oriental reading rooms, notes the NAO, will "be exceeded at or shortly after opening". It may be time to start planning a new library. If we start now it might be operational by the year 2020.

## DIARY

### Going to ze art of ze matter

President Chirac of France (below) will today address members of both the Commons and the Lords in the Royal Gallery at Westminster. I advise him to

take a blinder approach, look straight ahead and not give a sideways glance at the artwork. If he does look around, this is what he will see: a massive 45ft by 12ft picture by the Victorian artist Daniel MacIise of Wellington presiding over a pile of dead Frenchmen after the Battle of Waterloo. Immediately opposite – the victorious Nelson at Trafalgar.

What is a patriotic Frenchman to do? When Charles De Gaulle was being entertained in the Royal Gallery in the Sixties, he knew exactly what to do. He made a hell of a fuss when he caught sight of the first picture, and an even bigger fuss when he caught sight of the second. Can we expect a diplomatic incident today? I gather an advance team from the French Embassy has been in to inspect and has made no complaint. A spokesman in the Foreign and Commonwealth press office was also unperturbed: "Chirac is a great admirer of all things British. He holds the British Military in high regard, he is trying to copy it." And there is one small consolation for the French. The painting of Nelson is his death scene.

### Keeping criticism in the family

A heartwarming response from Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, during her visit to the Cannes film festival. Asked why she wasn't supporting the British director Mike Leigh, whose new film *Secrets And Lies* opens on Friday, she replied: "Because my daughter told

me *Trainspotting* was the one to see." There was I, thinking that ministers, civil servants, the British Film Institute et al got together to decide these things. I am delighted to learn that it's all down to family values after all.

### Dream on, Liverpool

Rob Jones, the Liverpool and England full-back, was one of the footballers who had poems published in a new book to raise money for charity. His poem, entitled "Don't Give Up On Your Dreams", exhorts us: "So the moral of this tale/ Never think you will fail/ Your dream can come true/ Whatever it is you want

to do." Immediately after publication, Liverpool lost the Cup Final, and now Jones has heard he will miss the European championships because of a back injury.

### With friends like these...

Et Tu Terry? With criticising the BBC now seemingly de rigueur in the *Radio Times*, Mr Eurovision Song Contest himself has decided to give his pay masters and points. Terry Wogan (right), no less, shows from the lip in the new issue, as he describes the ending of his chat show: "I wanted to give it up a year

### Poetry is its own reward

The large advertisements being taken out by The International Society of Poets for their Open Amateur Poetry Competition must be bringing dreams of riches to aspiring versifiers. But the more numerate poets might be as unimpressed as I am by their boast that "in recent years the Society has awarded more than £50,000 in prize money to more than 5,000 poets worldwide." I make that an average award of £12. Don't give up the day job just yet.

### Beef up the humour

Sir Kenneth Calman, the Government's Chief Medical Officer and the man who starts every conversation with the words "I will continue to eat beef," has added a touch of humour to his armoury. I hear: Addressing a meeting of doctors at the Civil Service College, he announced: "The good news is I can confirm it is safe to eat jelly babies – provided you don't eat the brain or spinal cord. I suppose satire might work. Nothing else has."

Eagle Eye



## FLAVOUR OF THE MONTH



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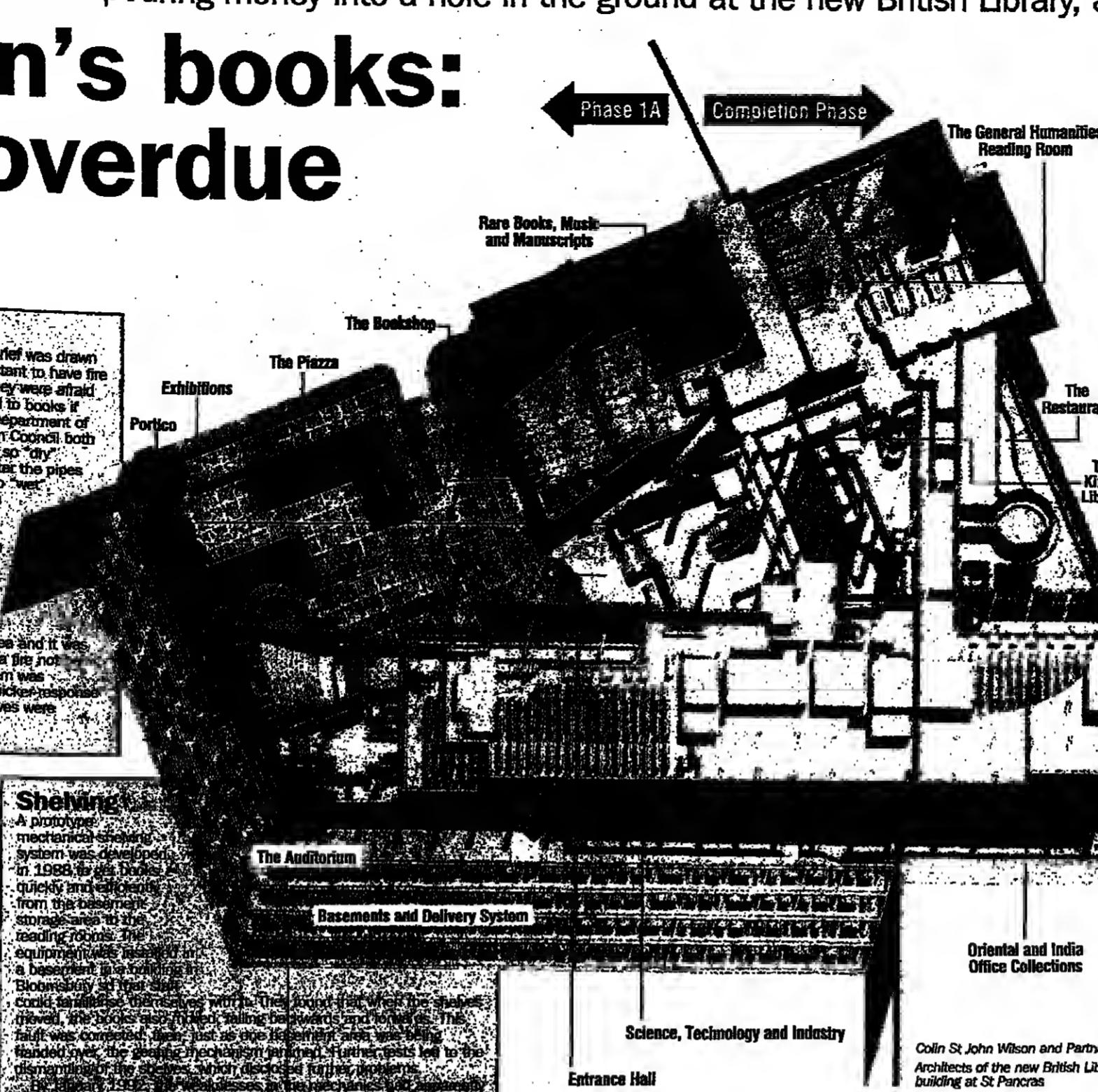
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13



### The British Library: A disaster in the making

1982: Building work begins.

1983: Ministers set cash limit of £300m for first phase, due to be completed in 1983; contracts awarded to install mechanical bookshelves and electrical cabling.

1984: Further £150m is agreed to take library to completion.

1985: Faults discovered with shelving system. First National Audit Office report. Handover of basement by contractors postponed because of problems with shelving.

1986: Problems with cabling revealed, contractors begin to rip it out and start again.

1987: Corrosion uncovered in pipes feeding sprinkler system, five expert reports commissioned to solve problem.

1988: Specification of sprinkler system completely changed, with new sprinkler heads, new pumps and valves. National Heritage select committee examines project. Department considers abandoning building completely but decides to award more cash. Cost goes up to £496m. Project director transferred to other duties.

1989: First phase completed.

1990: All money on project has been committed, including reserve to cover legal claims. Books to start moving in during November.

1991: Library due to open to readers in November.

### Cabling

More than 3,000km of low-voltage cables in metal casing were installed from 1988. An inspection by the contractor revealed a range of faults, from discolouring to naked and damaged wiring. External consultants declared that the cables were unsafe. Engineers blamed the damage on filters tearing the cables when they pulled them around sharp corners in the casing during installation. In 1994, contractors began an inch-by-inch inspection, replacing and repairing damaged wires as they went. An independent expert recommended putting in circuit-breakers to prevent fire or cables overheating and producing dangerous fumes. The circuit-breakers were installed last year. Only 60 per cent of the cabling was inspected because ceilings would have had to be removed to examine the rest, adding to the cost and delaying the project by seven months.

# THE INDEPENDENT

FOUNDED 1986

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## The need to know Chirac

President Chirac is an elusive and contradictory figure. He is also someone the British need to learn to get along with. He has been in office for just over a year. He will occupy the Elysée Palace for another six years and conceivably for another 13, well into the next century. The hopes of Britain playing a more active and constructive role in Europe crucially depend, whoever is in power in London, on whether Mr Chirac will be open to ideas and debate. Getting a fix on his politics, at home and abroad, is an urgent necessity for the British.

Jacques Chirac is hardly a new figure to us. He was ejected from his first, unhappy spell as Prime Minister of France under President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing 20 years ago. He traces his ideological ancestry to General de Gaulle: an intriguing mixture of nationalism and Europeanism, conservatism and stateism. None the less, it is often difficult to define what Mr Chirac stands for. He is not a traditionalist Gaullist: he is a reformer who has taken on some of the fiscal excesses of the French state. Some allege this means he is bringing Thatcherite remedies to France. But that is too simplistic. Such a judgement understates the extent of continuity with previous governments, particularly over European policy, where the Franco-German axis and plans for Economic and Monetary Union still form the central pillars of France's view of Europe.

In many ways it has been a muddled first year in power, in part because Mr Chirac has attempted so much, so quickly. Outside France, the resumption of nuclear tests in the Pacific was seen as an egregious reassertion of an outdated French obsession with strategic power. But the tests performed a domestic strategic purpose. By establishing his credentials as a guardian of French military interests, they enabled Mr Chirac to push through two startling acts of recognition of French military weakness.

The President took the first step towards re-integrating France in Nato after 30 years outside. Then he ordered the downsizing and professionalisation of the French military. Both had been recognised for years as politically hazardous but essential to France's real security interests. Mr Chirac has accomplished both with minimum domestic protest.

The record on social and economic policy is less straightforward. The street demonstrations of December forced the tearing up of parts of the plan to reform the bankrupt welfare state. The Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, is smuggling the pieces

back into the National Assembly one by one. As a result, the eventual scale of the cuts is difficult to assess, as is their political significance.

The initial decision to go for sharp spending cuts was, in effect, a rededication to French membership of EMU. Without an assault on social security spending – including health care, in particular – there was no hope of France meeting the criteria for joining a single currency in 1999. The opposition that the plans provoked led many in Britain to believe that Mr Chirac might have to abandon EMU for the sake of keeping the domestic peace. This view – a hope on the part of the Eurosceptics – is misplaced.

By all accounts, Mr Chirac toyed with

the idea but decided that the damage to Franco-German relations would be too great. The link between welfare reform and the EMU criteria is not generally accepted in French debate. French officials insist the policy is driven by sound post-Thatcherite economics to reduce the 56 per cent share of the French economy eaten up by the state.

The truth is more muddled. Almost all the spending cuts are being directed into reducing the French government deficit, to meet the Maastricht guidelines for EMU membership. Little so far is being used for Thatcher-style tax cuts. Mr Chirac, by all accounts, finds the business of shrinking the welfare state more painful than Mr Juppé, who is a more orthodox post-Thatcher figure. Mr Chirac hopes in the longer run to rechannel middle class welfare payments to deal with the increasingly ugly social problems of the French inner suburbs.

The "certain idea of France" that Mr Chirac talked of during his election campaign seems to come down to a country made powerful and respected abroad and less socially divided at home. Mr Chirac has begun to position France – sometimes painfully, sometimes surprisingly easily – to face the economic and security challenges of the modern world. He aims to achieve this both by using the state and reforming it by shrinking the state's weight and power: reducing the public sector, merging the franc into the euro, ending France's long isolation from Nato. EMU remains an enormous gamble. But there should be no mistaking the continuing centrality of France's relations with Germany for its European policy. It remains to be seen how long Mr Chirac can square what may yet become a circle: to maintain support for a traditional French approach to Europe at the expense of a reformist approach to the state's role at home.

## The drugs remedy

Perhaps it was his stepdaughter's admission that she smoked 100s a day that did it. Or maybe he is simply more mature about such issues than his predecessors and colleagues. Either way, the remarks made by Tony Newton, the Leader of the House, launching the Government's new anti-drugs campaign yesterday, were sensible and welcome.

Mr Newton acknowledged that the screaming scare campaigns of the past did not work. Remember those twisted, tortured teenagers with greasy hair and grubby clothes, hence the slogan "heroin screws you up"? It's a far cry from the treacle – if sweaty – clubbers who dance all night in Ecstasy. The old advertising campaigns bore so little relation to most young people's attitudes towards cannabis, crack, Ecstasy or amphetamines that it is no surprise they did not change anyone's behaviour.

The old campaigns weren't just out of

touch, they were patronising. The one guaranteed way to make teenagers switch off is to talk down to them. More than anything, teenagers need accurate information about the risks involved in taking drugs, and they need information that they will trust. Yesterday's new pamphlet is aimed particularly at parents. By giving them the facts about symptoms and risks, it gives them the chance to educate their children, and ease their own anxieties.

The rhetoric about drugs from our political remains of the old school. The Prime Minister yesterday fulminated about the "evil menace" of drugs. We agree with him that we should not be soft on dangerous drugs. Middle-class, middle-aged people may well feel more righteous to attack drugs in that way. But it should be obvious now that the most effective way to combat drug abuse among teenagers is through information and education, counselling and advice.

## No hypocrisy please, we're British

The story so far: There is much complaining about the way Members of Parliament receive outside payments that may affect their behaviour as our representatives.

Not to put too fine a point on it, there is a feeling that MPs are not to be trusted.

So MPs decide that in order to get MPs trusted again, MPs will reveal all the relevant payments made to them, and MPs will be trusted to reveal them all.

In due course, the list is published and it turns out that Roy Hattersley is the richest MP in the House.

Everyone knows that this is not true, because people like Edward Heath and David Mellor are rolling in consultancy money that they have not declared on the MPs' list of money received.

When taxed with this, Mellor and Heath and other people who are rolling in consultancy money say that they have only declared stuff which is relevant to their role as MPs, and that their other money has nothing at all to do with their role as an MP.

Full the other one, says half of the public.

OK, then, says the other half of the public – why not resign as MPs and see if those consultancy fees are still



MILES KINGTON

paid to you on merit after you have left Parliament; so we will know if you were right or not? Otherwise, just declare everything you have got and we will make up our minds whether it is relevant or not.

This does not appeal to Mellor or Heath.

Trust us, they say. But the whole reason that this system was started was precisely because we do not trust MPs to say the truth.

1. A lot of MPs have declared some of their earnings

2. Nobody trusts MPs any more than they did before, especially MPs like Mellor, Heath etc.

3. A lot of people trust MPs even less than before

4. Everyone now feels Roy Hattersley is the only person in Parliament you can have any confidence in.

Meanwhile, everyone abroad is

looking on with amusement at yet another example of British hypocrisy. I am sorry to have to say this, because it always comes as a shock when we realise that the world regards us as two-faced, or "Perfidie Albion", as the French admiringly refer to us.

The British do not like to be thought of as hypocrites, because they have been told from birth that the British are straight dealers and gentlemen, that we believe in fair play, that an Englishman's word is his bond, etc, that it's not cricket etc etc, that we say what we mean and don't beat about the bush, etc etc etc.

Unfortunately, this is a load of undecided income. The British are so adept at double-dealing and double-thinking that they have even brainwashed themselves into believing they are not so. We say one thing and mean another. We say "We must have lunch one day," and think "Not if I can help it". We say "How lovely!" and think "How ghastly!". So when someone tells the truth, we actually get rattled.

If, for instance, someone were to paint a portrait of the Queen at 70 and show her looking like a 70-year-old woman, one would not be surprised if there were an eruption of protest from people who wanted her painted as we would like to think she is, and not as she really is. But nobody

ever raises a protest over the ridiculously idealised picture of the Queen on postage stamps and bank notes, which make her look like some teenager from a 1940s fashion magazine, the concept of which is infinitely more two-faced and double-thinking than, well, than MPs' undeclared income.

However, none of this will ever be ironed out while the British go on thinking of themselves as the fair and square, honest-dealing nation among all the bribe-taking, dishonest nations.

No matter that even Sir Richard Scott is shocked by the way the Government twisted the meaning of what he had to say in the Scott report.

No matter that we have wholeheartedly adopted a new profession that actually sets out to be two-faced and hypocritical, called spin doctoring.

No matter that Prime Minister's Question Time is called Prime Minister's Question Time for the very good reason that all you get is questions and no answers.

No matter that behind the not-curtained facade of new Labour, Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson are said not even to be on speaking terms.

After all, life in Britain today is only a soap opera and we are the viewers, is that not so?

Now read on...



*Confess! or we'll put you on the Richard and Judy show!*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Literacy: teachers have an uphill struggle

Sir: Following the critical report by the Office for Standards in Education on the methods employed by teachers to teach children to read in three London boroughs (report, 8 May), I feel the need to stress that blaming teachers is not going to help. Yes, there is a problem of poor literacy and numeracy standards in our schools, but it's much more complicated. It depends on what's happening in the family, whether you are a boy or a girl and where you live, just as much as what happens in school.

What we need to do is to stop blaming everybody else and to come up with new ideas to get teachers, parents and employers to work together to improve the core skills of children at all ages. For example, in south-west London, Aztec is already piloting family literacy schemes in local schools and we also have initiatives aimed specifically at helping 11- to 16-year-olds raise their competence in core skills and improve their career prospects. But we have not done this independently, we have taken the time to meet and discuss what needs to be done and how it can be achieved with people in the local community who are directly affected. This is surely the best way forward.

IAN PARKES  
Chief Executive  
Aztec (Training and Enterprise Council for SW London)  
Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey

Sir: Your report "Aborted baby lived 45 minutes" (10 May) repeated the common view that choosing to kill a baby by abortion is a tragedy only if the baby is not disabled. The medical director of the NHS trust which carried out the abortion said: "Everyone was so upset it turned out to be healthy."

What message does this send out to those like me who have a severe disability? I have spina bifida, and the vast majority of

babies with my degree of disability are now aborted.

Why would everyone not have been equally upset if the baby had been disabled? The answer lies in our abortion law, which sets the tone for the discrimination disabled people encounter throughout their lives. For if there is no right to life, how can we expect a recognition of any other rights?

ALISON DAVIS  
Blandford Forum, Dorset

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

### Rights of handicapped babies

Sir: Your report "Aborted baby lived 45 minutes" (10 May) repeated the common view that choosing to kill a baby by abortion is a tragedy only if the baby is not disabled. The medical director of the NHS trust which carried out the abortion said: "Everyone was so upset it turned out to be healthy."

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### Facing the age of uncertainty

Sir: Polly Toynbee observes that "retirement is respectable and life is full of enjoyable and useful things to do outside the world of paid work" (13 May) and questions the right of the bulge generation to "have it all for ever".

JENNIFER CHEW  
Egham, Surrey

Sir: Leo Chapman of the Simplified Spelling Society advocates Cut Spelling to make it easier for children to learn to read and write (letter, 10 May).

We've been here before. The first Teaching Alphabet failed because children still had to make the transition to conventional orthography. They would have to do the same with Cut Spelling.

Esperanto is an attempt to create an easy-to-learn lingua franca. Again, this is now a linguistic curiosity.

The argument about Italian children learning to read and write in a shorter time than their British counterparts doesn't hold water. Italian may be simpler than English. Japanese is acknowledged as the world's most difficult language, with students still being taught to read and write well into their teens. This hasn't stopped Japan becoming an economic superpower.

If spelling was simplified we would lose contact with our history embodied in the language.

PETER STOCKILL  
Middlesbrough

Sir: So Polly Toynbee is out of sympathy with the aims of the Employers' Forum on Age. Ageism is not, in her view, as pernicious as dis

crimination on the grounds of sex, race and disability. After all, persuading employers to retain older workers must affect the number of jobs for the young.

Indeed it must. As must employing women reduce the number of jobs for men, blacks the number of jobs for whites, and the disabled the number of jobs for non-disabled persons. All forms of discrimination are iniquitous and the only criterion for employing staff should be their ability to do the job.

I wonder how old Polly Toynbee is. If she really believes what she writes, then does she not feel it is perhaps time for her to retire to make way for a younger person?

She has had her turn at being young, as she puts it, and "retirement is respectable and life is full of enjoyable and useful things to do outside the world of paid work."

BRIDGET BODDANO  
London SW12

Sir: As a 50-year-old admirer of Joanna Lumley (profile, 11 May), I wonder if it is possible that she has not "above all ... triumphed over the menopausal years", but like many of us triumphed during the menopausal years and perhaps even as a consequence of the menopause. And would you make this type of remark about a male actor? I think not. Fifty-something men are not marginalised and secoo are baty, scary or a joke.

FRANCES CAMPBELL  
Belfast

### Legal minefield in rural France

Sir: I read with interest Gerard Gilbert's article on "the French weekend retreat" (4 May) as I know the Seine Maritime region of Normandy well and can well imagine the pleasures of having a weekend bolt-hole in the area. My Monday mornings frequently produce clients hoping to buy in France and as a solicitor I am forced to put my enthusiasm for Calvados to one side and to discuss the best way to structure the property purchase, particularly if, as with Gilbert's case, co-ownership may sometimes help, although the costs of setting up a corporate structure may prove prohibitive in properties of relatively low value.

A can of worms? Ideally (and usually) not, so long as the long-term implications of the venture are thought through.

FIONA RAWES  
London EC4

Sir: Emma Daly reports from Zagreb (13 May) that Croatia's likely admission to the Council of Europe raises the issue of President Franjo Tudjman's undemocratic behaviour, in particular his riding roughshod over the Zagreb city council. Shades of Mrs Thatcher and the GLC!

But there is a far more substantive issue – Croatia's new-found ethnic purity. Why the collective amnesia over the murderous expulsion of 175,000 Krajina Serbs in August last year? That was, alas, an example of impeccably democratic behaviour.

YUGO KOVACH  
Twickenham, Middlesex

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Day of inaction

Sir: A couple of months ago I was surprised to read about National Constitution Day and intrigued as to how one is supposed to take part. I have now picked up a leaf

## Fast forward to the digital revolution

Multi-channeling is a welcome prospect if it frees us from the tyranny of the programme controller

**T**he Biggest and Busiest-Ever Sizzling Summer of Sport?" boasts BBC publicity. Terrific. Seven hundred hours of airtime and £125m of men and balls. Euro 96 football hits the screen on 8 June, to be followed by 300 hours of the Olympics starting in July. ITV will be screening some of Euro 96 live at the same time. Wonderful.

"This extraordinary rich summer," the BBC boasts, will include: men in cars in the British Grand Prix; men with bats in two test match series; men on horses at Goodwood and Ascot and men with clubs at the golf Open, as well as Wimbledon.

What is going on here? Sport is taking over the nation in quite a new way, seeping into the interstices of every aspect of national consciousness. Even those entirely bored by men and balls cannot help but recognise Ruud Gullit or Gary Lineker, however much they wish they didn't. Does sport increasingly stand as a substitute for everything missing from real life? Excitement, engagement, loyalty, passion, heroes, hold extremities of human endeavour?

Or is it just the latest product in the mass entertainment industry to be given the full promotional treatment? Sport used to be raw, rugged and dignified. Now it has become part of the pop industry. In the old days young boys crowded around for soccer stars' photographs, but now it is the pre-teen girls who go to scream at Ryan Giggs as they would at Oasis.

Soccer has become sexualised as never before. Who ever thought of screaming at Danny Blanchflower or Stanley Matthews in their long baggy

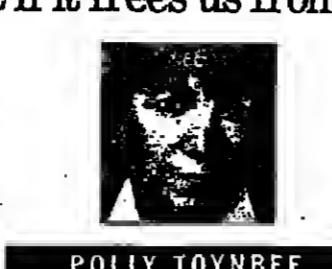
shorts? When Oasis and Blur took to the football field this week, screamed at by bodes of young girls, it marked a merging of the two worlds—pop stars who want to be soccer stars and vice versa. The packaging is everything. The soccer stars of Newcastle and Liverpool now regularly take to the catwalks in fashion shows, their beautiful bodies an asset as precious as their football feet.

When there is no sport on, light entertainment steps in to fill the breach with an ever-burgeoning strand of proxy sport shows from *Fantasy Football* to *Question of Sport*. Sports stars, however dim and inarticulate, now adorn celebrity spots of every kind—*know what I mean?*

Professor Laurie Taylor, a media sociologist, observes that sports commentators these days delve deeper than ever into the psychology of the players. "They've got their cameras up their noses," he says. "It's all one long extended psychoanalysis, all through a tennis match, or a snooker tournament." It turns matches into soap-operas. But why is sport growing in popularity and consuming everything else? He suggests sport is raw reality out there on the field in a world where everything else on television is a confection of synthetic emotions.

But that is "genuine"? To those who are not fans, sport looks like the ultimate artifice—groups of grown men paid large sums of money to exert all energy in pursuit of something entirely meaningless.

Be that as it may, however, plainly a very great number of people (mainly, but not entirely, men) want to watch this stuff. Another large number of



POLLY TOYNBEE

Sport used to be rugged and dignified. Now it's part of the pop industry

people (mainly, but not entirely, women) would rather not. But programme controllers are men, and these days they claim a lot of women do like sport, really. Or at least many do watch it, according to the ratings. But other research shows that the remote control in the household is almost invariably under the hand of the male in the room—the programme controllers in every sitting room—so it only adds insult to injury to include in the ratings all those women obliged to watch against their will.

This gender separation of tastes means that no sooner does the BBC launch its sporting schedule with great razzamatazz, gloating over its undoubted prowess in sports coverage this summer than it gets hit by a backlash of angry women and others: "Soaps get the boot from saturation sport" blares the *Daily Mail*, complaining that soaps, and even the 9 o'clock *News* will be displaced by live sport fix-

tures. "This is not what we pay the licence fee for," protests the Rev Graham Stevens, chairman of the National Viewers and Listeners' Association.

Channel 4 glows smugly in anticipation of scooping up the soccer refugees. John Willis, Director of Programmes, says, apart from half an hour a day of men on bikes—the Tour de France—"We shall be targeting an audience not interested in kicking pigs' bladders into nets—which we assume will be mainly women." OK, so what do women like? "Big musicals like *Oklahoma* and *Showboat*. A series called the *Celuloid Closet*, a season about gays and lesbians on the Hollywood screen, plus gay icons of *Coronation Street*. And *Gender Quake*, about men being neutered by women ruling the world." Well, well.

The truth is, television is bursting at the seams. It is now exceedingly difficult to please enough of the people enough of the time. Last week's unfolding of the digital future by the BBC gave us a glimpse of an entirely new world of possibilities, with a plethora of services and stations. The BBC and commercial digital services will be up and running as early as autumn next year. Before long every viewer will become their own programme controller, with news, sport, films, live and library services on tap. Separate 24-hour stations will offer us Parliament live, music, BBC classic comedy, BBC World News, arts programmes and any programme you ever missed on high-definition screens with CD-quality sound.

This week's unveiling of the all-sport summer schedule shows the sceptical just why all that is needed. The long hot summer of "sizzling sport" will stand as a reminder of why we need digital broadcasting—freed from the hegemony of the programme controller for ever.

More affluent, more specialised, more demanding, more sophisticated and more quarrelsome audiences want a myriad things. We are no longer the same people who sat down together as a nation obediently watching *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*—and lump it.

During the passing of the Broadcasting Bill which lays out the legal framework for this extraordinary new digital world, the Lords rebelled. Was it to insert stronger guarantees of quality, to deter a world of 500 stations of trash or to ensure that all domestic satellite services be obliged to carry the BBC as well? No. The only thing that really ignited public debate was sport again. The Lords said that the "Crown Jewels" of television should be preserved for terrestrial channels for ever. What did they regard as sacrosanct? Eight sporting events. And with that they satisfied themselves that the future of British broadcasting was safe. Phew!

The significance of the imminent digital revolution is largely passing our legislators unheeded. Some commentators fear wall-to-wall rubbish, others celebrate the prospect of the best always on offer. Some worry if any one station can assemble enough viewers to fund good programmes. The best guess is that big audiences will still gather around high-quality programmes, and the BBC will still be the sheet anchor guaranteeing the uniquely high-quality of British television.

This long hot summer of "sizzling sport" will stand as a reminder of why we need digital broadcasting—freed from the hegemony of the programme controller for ever.

## When it is right to destroy nature

Nicholas Schoon argues that we should not try to conserve every plant and animal species

One of Britain's rarest fungi is found only in the dung of New Forest ponies. Several colleagues greeted this information with derision when my little article about plans to conserve this species, the nail fungus, appeared in Monday's *Independent*. Why bother? It is a fair question: today the Government publishes plans to conserve the diversity of Britain's plants and animal species.

These are powerful images, but I cannot see any connection. Wild habitats and the mind-boggling diversity of species in the sea, on the land and in the air (there are tens of thousands in Britain alone) were created by blind, utterly impersonal forces such as changes in climate, earlier mass extinctions and evolution.

Even so, the most rudimentary understanding of

Why should red squirrels or golden eagles get all the attention?

processes involved leads you straight to the realisation that each species is special, however boring, ugly and even unpleasant it may appear to us. It has its own uniqueness, its own place, its own history, which is of a different order to the boring, trivial uniqueness of each separate grain of sand on a beach. Once you accept that, the fluffy animal approach to wildlife conservation seems barbaric, irrational. Why should red squirrels and golden eagles and beautiful butterflies get all the attention merely because a majority of humans think they are cute?

If we are rational and care to understand the natural world we uneasily live in, then every wild being threatened by mankind's economic and population growth deserves equal conservation efforts from us—including the lowly nail fungus.

There are exceptions—species such as smallpox and the tsetse fly which cause serious suffering and death to people. We have the right to eliminate those entirely, provided that in doing so we do not endanger entire ecosystems and ourselves (which is what happened with DDT).

If every species is unique and of equal value, what gives us that right? Two reasons. Homo sapiens is by far the most interesting and important species on the planet—like it or not we are lords of nature. And in choosing to wage war on our natural enemies, we are only playing by nature's own rules.

## The Westminster malaise

Labour's plans to reform the House of Commons are insufficient, says Vernon Bogdanor

**T**raditionally, the British Left has been more concerned to capture the state than to reform it. Labour, upon winning power, used it to push through top-down reforms in welfare, planning and nationalisation. These reforms were not, however, accompanied by any programme designed to secure public control or accountability in the new institutions created to administer Labour's programmes. This lack of accountability constitutes perhaps one reason why so many of the reforms failed to realise the hopes placed in them.

Under Tony Blair's leadership, however, Labour has departed radically from this part of its heritage, and has developed a bold and wide-ranging programme of constitutional reform to include devolution, reform of the House of Lords and a referendum on electoral reform. The latest part of this programme—reform of the House of Commons—was revealed yesterday at a meeting organised by Charter 88. It is badly needed.

For the decline in public approval for the House of Commons has been precipitous. Just five years ago, a MORI poll indicated that 59 per cent of the public believed that the Commons worked well. Today, the figure is only 43 per cent. It is not that the Commons is necessarily less efficient or more corrupt than it was, but rather that public expectations have risen apace. Just as the public demands more from welfare services than it did in the more deferential past, so, also, in a consumerist age, the public expects more from Parliament. Therein lies the challenge to the modern state.

Yesterday, Tony Blair attacked the ritual of Prime Minister's Question Time, the only aspect of Commons activity seen by the vast majority of the public. The futility of this twice-weekly charade is not only destroying respect for the Commons as an institution, but the adversarialism which it symbolises prevents the Commons from fulfilling its central duty, that of scrutinising legislation. Standing committees, in theory designed to do just that, are in reality mere ad hoc debating committees within which Second Reading speeches are repeated at tedious length interspersed with the reading



Turning up the heat: the Commons chamber before the fire of 1834. Labour's reforms will not work unless the electoral system is changed first

Bridgeman Art Library/British Library/Rowlandson

of well-rehearsed briefs helpfully supplied by interested organisations.

Part of the problem is that the forensic and investigatory procedures of the Commons are confined to the departmentally related select committees, which are precluded from considering legislation. The standing committees, by contrast, are controlled by the whips; they are unable to summon witnesses to comment on the merits of the legislation that they are scrutinising, or to investigate the adequacy of the reasons given for proposed new legislation. Nor can they monitor whether legislation, once put on the statute book, is working as intended.

Labour now proposes not only a dramatic increase in the power of the select committees but also a fundamental change in their functioning. They should be used, declared Ann Taylor, Labour's spokesperson on parliamentary matters, to examine the proposed chairs of agencies and quangos and to ratify senior public appointments, such as the Governor of the Bank of England.

More radically, they should be able to conduct pre-legislative inquiries

**The dominance of the party whips lies at the heart of the problem**

with the aid of witnesses into proposed legislation. They could, for example, examine Green and White Papers and other published material, so assisting preparatory work on legislation and informed parliamentary debate. It is doubtful if the poll tax, for example, or the child support leg-

islation would have survived scrutiny of this kind.

Ann Taylor admitted that such a reform would considerably prolong the time taken to steer legislation to the statute book. It would thereby handicap the parliamentary programme of a Labour government. To balance this, the opposition would be required to accept, as part of a package of reform, the timetabling of bills and it would have to be prepared to allow bills to be rolled over from one parliamentary session to another, rather than, as at present, being killed at the end of a session. In fact, such a package would be much to the advantage of the Opposition. For the power of delay has proved to be a largely spurious power. It has not in practice prevented most governments from achieving their legislative programme. The power to call witnesses before select committee hearings on legislation, by contrast, is a much more substantial power and likely to redound to the advantage of the opposition parties.

There is, however, a deeper problem with Labour's proposals. Hitherto, the select committees have operated best when they have operated consensually. Were they to become involved in scrutinising a government's legislative programme, the whips would soon turn their attention to them. Ann Taylor suggested at yesterday's meeting that back-benchers rather than the whips should determine select committee membership. But that is probably a Utopian hope.

It is indeed the dominance of the party whips which lies at the heart of the malaise at Westminster. How is it to be ended? Can the adversarial system in the Commons be destroyed without also destroying the electoral system that produces it? At present there is a spectrum of opinion in the country and in the Commons which finds itself artificially channelled into just two hostile camps by the vagaries of first past the post. Under proportional representation, by contrast, political opinion could flow naturally into its various channels, and the select committees could prove genuinely representative of the multiplicity of political viewpoints in the country.

Thus the deepest question raised by Labour's proposed parliamentary reforms is whether they can in fact be implemented in a political system that remains fundamentally adversarial.

This is actually unscientific bunkum; the *Lion King* view of nature. A genuine ecologist will tell you that ecosystems are in constant flux rather than balance. While species can have extraordinarily complex and co-operative relationships, for the most part their interactions are utterly ruthless and consist of eating or being eaten.

Nature seems very careless with its own. For the billions of years during which life on earth has existed, individual species have been continuously disappearing. Existing species or entirely new ones soon take their place. But there is enormous creativity and complexity emerging from the ceaseless struggle—you only have to find out a little about a coral reef, a mangrove swamp or an ancient

## Dorrell must decide what he wants from doctors

It is unrealistic to expect GPs to be both managers and clinicians, writes Alan Maynard

Just what do we want in primary care? Government policy is incoherent and the profession, represented by the strongest of trade unions, the British Medical Association, doesn't know whether it is coming or going.

The Government likes the idea of general practice funding. It has given generous budgets to successive waves of fundholders, resulting in over 50 per cent of the population being covered by them. This massive experiment has not been evaluated: Kenneth Clarke, then the Secretary of State for Health, rejected evaluation as unnecessary because, like his colleague, Mrs Thatcher, he did not wish to be "confused by facts". As a result, the lessons of funding are difficult to learn. Initial studies showed that fundholders appeared to prescribe less in the early years. However, more recent follow-up shows that these effects have disappeared and fundholders are similar to non-fundholders in drug expenditure.

For effective funding, management must be excellent to ensure vigorous and cost-effective purchasing of hospital services. However, GPs have been trained as generalists, the "gatekeepers" who treat 95 per cent of illness in the com-

munity and, on a good day, restrict over-use of hospitals. GPs have not been trained as managers of complex fundholding organisations working in a competitive environment.

It is on this managerial weakness that next week's Audit Commission report will, according to leaks, focus. Fundholding has reversed power relationships. At the joke goes, GPs used to send consultants Christmas cards to get their patients up the waiting list. Now hospital consultants send GP fundholders Christmas cards to ensure they get business.

Fundholders, particularly the initial waves, were well funded and NHS trusts, strapped for cash, gave precedence to the patients of fundholders. This has been covert in some areas, but, in the tightly funded NHS of 1996-97, it will become much clearer: cash will produce care.

This differential access to hospital care is replacing the access inequalities of the pre-reform NHS where consultants called the tune and decided—according to disparate, incoherent and unaccountable criteria—who got access.

If local NHS purchasers are to pay GPs fees for more hospital work, can quality be maintained? Quality can only be achieved if GPs and nurse practitioners are well trained and well managed. Again, management is central. The management costs of the NHS are relatively modest and the quality of management remains uneven. The Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell, in his reduction of expenditure on "grey suits", ensures that the management specialists. Politicians of all parties advocate a "primary care-led NHS". This notion is vague and relatively untouched by human thought, let alone evidence. Draft NHS circulars envisage many hospital procedures being moved out into the community and primary care.

This movement will be expedited by money: as Kenneth Clarke noted during the NHS reform process, if you rattle the GPs' wallets, they are very attentive. The 1990 GP contract offered fees for minor surgery to cut down hospital "lumps and bumps" work. That work has continued, but GPs now do lots of surgery (for money) which is sometimes deficient (eg, the partial removal of cancerous lumps is not good practice).

If local NHS purchasers are to pay GPs fees for more hospital work, can quality be maintained? Quality can only be achieved if GPs and nurse practitioners are well trained and well managed. Again, management is central. The management costs of the NHS are relatively modest and the quality of management remains uneven. The Secretary of State for Health, Stephen Dorrell, in his reduction of expenditure on "grey suits", ensures that the management

of an NHS budget of £40bn is inadequate. The paradox of primary care is that everyone loves it but no one evaluates it and the Government is confused in its policies. Does it want GPs to be managers? If so, they need training, in which case the question is: who will do their clinical work? Does the Government want GPs to be semi-specialists rather than generalists? If so, please train them and manage them and their support staff so that they do not damage patient health.

Perhaps the appropriate role for GPs should be as the generalist filter of the chaff of human suffering, whose job it is to identify the rare acute form of illness in their populations and transfer them rapidly to secondary care. Whatever their tasks, it is necessary to monitor and evaluate primary care so that policies like funding produce knowledge to facilitate our avoidance of the charms of the next untested panacea adopted by politicians.

The writer is secretary of the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust for research and policy studies in health services.

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## BTR leads British moves against works councils

**BARRIE CLEMENT**

Labour Editor

Some of Britain's biggest conglomerates are secretly plotting to undermine the power of European works councils, a document leaked to the *Independent* reveals.

Directors at BTR have decided that a single council for the whole company would be "large, complex and irrelevant

other than to some politically-motivated union groups." Under European law the council is designed to act as a forum for consulting and informing employees over strategy.

Minutes of a meeting held at Windsor disclose BTR management's belief that such a body would also be, "difficult to manage and control and would be inviting groups together whom we would want to keep

apart." The document says that information will be exchanged at a meeting with other like-minded organisations such as Hanson, Tomkins, American Brands and Coolsco. Some of the companies are identified with the secretive European Works Council Study Group, which is made up largely of conglomerates keen to minimise the impact of the legislation.

At the BTR meeting, held on

14 November last year, directors opted for a "simple and minimalist" approach, with works councils established to cover "product groupings" on an individual site basis. The conglomerate is made up of five main commercial interests: industrial products, transport, construction, electrical systems and consumer products. The legal obligation to provide "transnational information"

would be catered for by the attendance at the meetings once a year by a representative of the BTR parent group.

All companies with 1,000 employees in European Union countries, with 150 in each of two member states, must set up a works council. They are able to establish a structure on a voluntary basis until 22 September, after which it will be strictly circumscribed by a European di-

rective. Britain's opt-out from the social chapter of the Maastricht Treaty does not exempt UK-based multinationals from the law, but allows companies to exclude UK workers. Noce has so far registered its intention to do so.

The TUC was dismayed by the contents of the BTR document. Nick Clark, the TUC's works council specialist, argued that many companies had

been far more positive about the legislation in order to tailor the structure to accommodate both the needs of the business and the aspirations of the workforce.

He accused BTR and other conglomerates of operating "by stealth". He said: "The attitude seems to undermine the intention of the directive and subvert its spirit. What have they got to hide? What are they afraid their workers will find out?"

**Railtrack heads for price tag of £1.95bn**

**PETER RODGERS**

Business Editor

Railtrack was last night heading for a £1.95bn price tag, at the top of the estimated range, as it emerged that more than £6bn is chasing the institutional share allocations.

The offer to pension funds, insurance companies and other professional investment institutions is well over four times subscribed, City sources said.

The institutions are to be allocated up to 70 per cent of the shares and the offers they have made are believed to be at the top of the 350p-390p range.

It is the institutional offers that will set the price on Friday, and private investors will pay 10p less a share.

The number of private investor applications for the retail offer is also thought to have passed 200,000 by the end of last week, several working days ahead of the close at noon today. The retail offer is believed to be oversubscribed on the basis of the number of applications already in.

But it was not clear last night whether there would be a big enough rush in the closing stages to allow the Government to increase substantially the proportion going to private investors from the minimum 30 per cent. The public success of the issue is likely to be measured by how far the retail offer is increased above 30 per cent, with a proportion of more than 40 per cent widely seen as the target.

However, City sources predicted a last-minute surge as share shops send in their final batches of applications. Almost 2 million investors registered for the offer, and on past experience the Government would be disappointed if less than 30 per cent of these - 660,000 - turned into formal applications.

There have been fears that the row over plans for price cuts announced by British Gas's regulator on Monday will deter investors in Railtrack, which is also a regulated utility.

If this row does have an impact, it is likely to show up in the pace of last-minute applications yesterday and this morning.

The argument between British Gas and its regulator was over how to value the assets of the company. But Railtrack's regulator last year abandoned the idea of setting charges on the basis of return on assets - as used by the gas regulator - and instead set them at levels that "would not make it unduly difficult for Railtrack to finance its activities," according to the prospectus.

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## PowerGen set to reward investors with share buyback

**MICHAEL HARRISON**

PowerGen is today expected to announce plans to reward investors with a share buyback following the £353 disposal yesterday of its 21 per cent stake in Midlands Electricity to the two US utilities buying the company.

The generator, whose own bid for Midlands was controversially blocked by the President of the Board of Trade Ian Lang three weeks ago, is also expected to confirm that it has decided not to seek a judicial review of the decision.

PowerGen has the authority to buy back up to 10 per cent of its share capital - a move that would cost just under £400m. The market had been expecting the company to set out how it planned to benefit shareholders following the collapse of the bid for Midlands and had pencilled in a buyback, special dividend or accelerated dividend policy.

Today's announcement is also expected to contain news of an acceleration in Power-

Gen's dividend policy and will coincide with the publication of the company's 1995 results which have been brought forward by a week.

The market is looking for pre-tax profits of between £580m and £605m and a further cut in dividend cover. Last year the dividend was covered 3.3 times by earnings and PowerGen said its intention was to reduce cover to between 2.5 and 2.7 times "in the coming years".

Analysts are hopeful that PowerGen will be able to match even if the courts had ruled in its favour, it felt it had little option but to sell its stake.

The timing and size of a share buyback will depend on market conditions and price and is not expected to take place immediately.

The sale of the Midlands stake will cost PowerGen a profit of £69m and raise the holding of Avvo Energy Partners - a joint venture between General Public Utilities and Cinergy - to just under 29 per cent.

This removes the threat of a rival stepping in, and buying up PowerGen's stake to make a

contested bid. A spokesman for the two US utilities welcomed the move which makes it almost certain that the £1.7bn offer - which is already agreed - will go through successfully.

PowerGen's legal advice appears to have been that it had a strong and credible but not overwhelming case for a judicial review of the Lang decision. However, when the American bid materialised at a price which PowerGen would not have been prepared to match even if the courts had ruled in its favour, it felt it had little option but to sell its stake.

Proceeding with a judicial review in those circumstances would, it appears, have stretched credibility. There is unlikely to be any firm news today, however, on whether or not PowerGen will go ahead with the £370m sale of two power stations to the Hanson-owned Eastern Energy.

PowerGen put the plant on hold while it bid for Midlands was blocked, fearing that otherwise it would be facing increased competition in the generating market at the same

time as being held back from competing in supply.

Ed Wallis, PowerGen's chairman, is expected to argue that it does not yet have the regulatory certainty it would like in return for disposing of the plant - a move that would reduce earnings by 2-3 per cent.

The electricity regulator, Professor Stephen Littlechild, has warned that he may refer PowerGen to the Monopolies and Merger Commission if the plant disposal does not go ahead.

National Power, whose bid

for Southern Electric was also blocked by Mr Lang, is also expected to announce a shareholder incentive package when it produces its annual results later this month.

There had been speculation that it could reward investors with a package of special dividends, share-buy back and enhanced dividends worth up to £2bn.

However, the decision of Mr Lang also to retain the Government's golden shares in the two generators, making them bid-proof, has reduced the need to maintain shareholder loyalty with exorbitant payouts.

## Allied bosses warned to stop rot in profits

**TOM STEVENSON**

City Editor

Allied Domecq's new chairman Sir Christopher Hogg has given the spirits to pub group's senior management a stark ultimatum: improve profits at what has been one of the FTSE 100's worst performers or face the consequences.

Tony Hales, chief executive, underlined the pressure being placed on them by Sir Christopher, saying: "We have no illusions that a return to earnings growth is the priority, and that this management team will be judged on that basis. We are determined that our strategy should deliver sustainable profits recovery."

He was speaking as Allied confirmed the profits warning it made at February's annual meeting, its second gloomy trading statement in little over half a year. Profits in the six months to February tumbled 24 per cent to £317m (£416m), thanks mainly to a slump in profits at the group's spirits and wine operation.

Despite plenty of warning, the shares slipped another 5p to 497p as the City digested a dividend of 9.44p for the six month period and the broad hint that the payout would remain largely unchanged at about 23.6p for the full year to August.

Attention was firmly focused on Sir Christopher's strategy for the future. Great faith has been placed by investors in his ability

## BoE forecast dashes hopes for rate cut

**DIANE COYLE**

Economics Editor

Inflation will fall below 2.5 per cent this year, the Bank of England predicted in its quarterly *Inflation Report* yesterday. But it warned that the risk of inflation climbing above the Government's target in 1998 makes it difficult to see a case for cutting interest rates further.

Mervyn King, the Bank's chief economist, said the recent reductions in the cost of bor-

rowing had been a reaction to the danger of a slowdown in the economy. "You can see it as taking out an insurance policy against the downside risk. There is a case for continuing to pay the premium for a while longer, but it is not easy to see the case for increasing the premium," he said.

The *Inflation Report* warned that it was at this stage of the cycle that policy mistakes tended to be made, with short-term weakness in manufacturing

masking the future buoyancy of the economy. Although its forecast showed inflation at 2.5 per cent in two years' time, it was "marginally more likely than not" that it would climb above the target if base rates were left unchanged at their current 6 per cent level.

Economists interpreted the *Report* as a signal that the Bank would oppose another interest rate cut. "The Bank is letting us know that the next move will be up," said James Barty, an econ-

omist at investment bank Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

Some City analysts think a rise will be needed later this year. However, most think rates will not be changed until the general election. "It is difficult to see the Bank raising rates before then," said Bill Martin, chief economist at UBS.

Mr King said that how soon monetary policy would need to react to evidence of risks to the inflation target in the future de-

pends on how the economy evolves in the next few months.

According to the *Report*, two factors might slow growth in the short-term: weaker exports to Europe and the overhang of stocks. However, these dangers were diminishing.

Other indicators suggested that growth would pick up next year. The Bank predicts above-trend growth in consumer spending and expects investment to increase.

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## British Gas steps up attack on regulator

**MICHAEL HARRISON**

Economics Editor

British Gas yesterday stepped up its attack on the "draconian" price controls proposed by the industry regulator, Clare Spottiswoode, by up to £850m, amount to retrospective regulation and effectively allow Ofgas to clawback past depreciation from shareholders and distribute it to consumers.

In particular, the British Gas camp drew attention to statements by two academics who have advised Ofgas which were said to contradict Ms Spottiswoode's contention that the price curbs on its pipeline business TransCo represented a "fair balance" between interests of shareholders and customers.

The move came as Harry Mouison, managing director of TransCo, met senior officials at the Department of Trade and Industry to protest at the Ofgas proposals and put British Gas's case that they could lead to 10,000 job losses and undermine

the safety and reliability of the transportation system.

British Gas contends that the price curbs, which could cut revenue from its pipeline business TransCo by up to £850m, amount to retrospective regulation and effectively allow Ofgas to clawback past depreciation from shareholders and distribute it to consumers.

These are key areas of dispute since British Gas and Ofgas fail to reach agreement then the company will be referred automatically to the MMC at the end of July.

Comment, page 18

## BCCI creditors get £1bn payout boost

**JOHN EISENHAMMER**

Financial Editor

More than 35,000 long-suffering British creditors of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International took a big step towards seeing their first compensation payout as Abu Dhabi yesterday handed over £1bn to the liquidators.

Deloitte & Touche said the precise amount to be paid to creditors is still subject to court decisions currently in progress. Earlier this year the liquidators had hinted that the payout would be at least 20p in the pound, but were hopeful of increasing this by recovering large funds from several litigation cases under way.

The final obstacle to settlement was cleared before Christmas in a Luxembourg court, ending years of frustration and legal squabbling since the bank was shot down by regulators in the United States.

July 1991 following the discovery of massive fraud.

Abu Dhabi, which was the major shareholder in the bank, yesterday handed over £1bn as part of an overall settlement worth £1.2bn. Abu Dhabi has also paid £167m into escrow which will be released later this year.

The money from Abu Dhabi forms the bulk of the retrieved funds, which amount to over £2.2bn. About £300m have been won in a settlement with Saudi Arabia's most prominent banking family, while a number of funds have been located in the United States.

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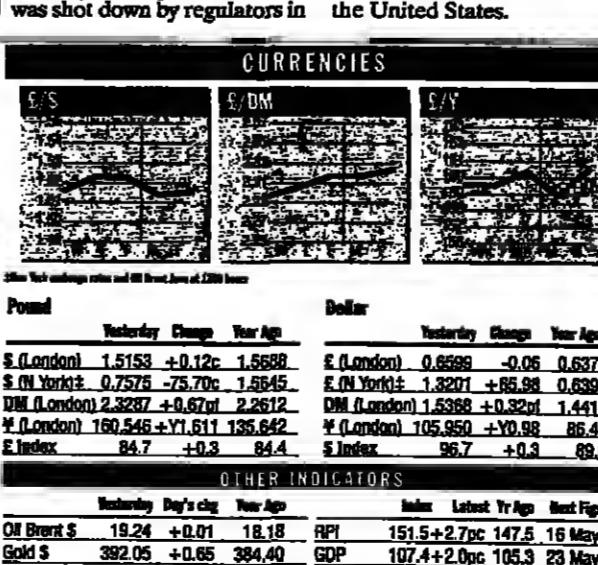
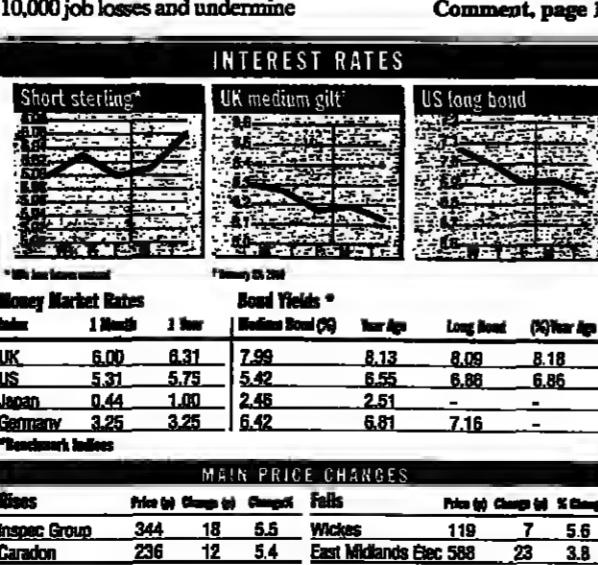
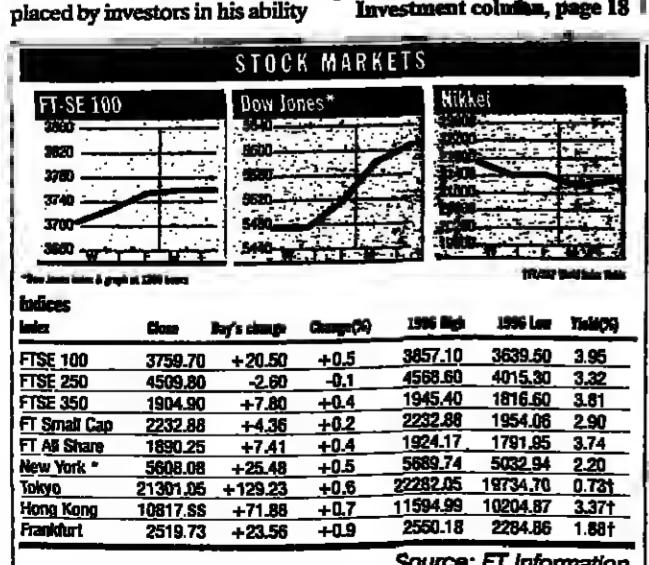
**16th May**

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## Polls aside, Clarke is getting the economy right

### COMMENT

If steady, sustainable growth and low inflation do not set the electoral pulses racing, there will continue to be politicians arguing for a burst of unsustainable growth instead.

Does the British electorate prefer its economy to be badly run? Certainly there are worse conclusions that might be drawn from the fact that Ken Clarke's adept management of the economy appears to have no effect at all on the Conservative Party's dismal showing in the polls. Yesterday's Bank of England Inflation Report brought further vindication of the Government's policies. Management of the economy has been, on conventional measures, a huge success.

The report painted a picture of another two years of steady growth and low inflation to come, although it did warn that base rates might need to rise a bit to extend this favourable performance. The Bank even hinted that it agreed with the Chancellor's claim that the economy's growth potential had improved thanks to the flexible labour market. The unemployment count could be pushed down towards 1.5 million without triggering inflation, it said.

Mr Clarke issued a warning earlier this week that he would not sacrifice the public finances in order to announce big tax cuts in the next Budget. It is a fair bet that he will not cut the cost of borrowing again when the Bank of England has started to warn that an increase might be needed. If he does the right thing on both counts, it will be proof of the success of the current policy arrangements, which are designed to get away from the pattern of boom and bust that has long afflicted this country.

However, there must still be a danger that siren voices in the Conservative Party will lure the Chancellor off course. If steady, sustainable growth and low inflation do not set the electoral pulses racing, there will continue to be politicians arguing for a burst of unsustainable growth instead. It is a false temptation. Voters stay unimpressed by the macroeconomic indicators because they tell you nothing about the sort of things that trouble them - the absence of full-time rather than part-time jobs, the disappearance of perks like tea-breaks at work, the battle it takes to get hospital treatment for an elderly relative, the shabbiness of their environment. Britain does not feel like a prosperous economy yet.

Good economic management is a long game, and the rewards for Mr Clarke getting the big picture right will go to one of his successors. But he should continue to resist the political cynicism of those who argue that he might as well stop trying.

### On reflection, Ofgas' case is still strong

The *Independent* found itself virtually alone yesterday among broadsheet newspaper business sections in supporting Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, against the cries of foul emanating from British Gas/TransCo. With the dust beginning to settle on Ofgas's explosive proposals, it is worth

asking the question again: are they unfair on shareholders? One difficulty with answering the question is that it is actually quite hard to find any genuinely independent expert to provide an assessment. We phoned National Economic Research Associates, acknowledged experts in the economic regulation of utilities. Er... hard for us to comment, they said, since we are advising TransCo. What about Professor Michael Beesley of the London Business School? He was part of the last Monopolies and Mergers Commission team to examine these issues so he ought at least to know which side is right to claim MMC support for its view. Sorry old boy, no can do. I'm advising Ofgas, you see.

Oh well, we'll just have to try ourselves, with a little help from Peter Vass, research director of the Centre for the Study of Regulated Industries (who presumably is independent). So, dear reader, sit up and concentrate for we are about to enter territory which although guaranteed to make the eyes glaze over is of great import to the future of the utilities and how they are regulated.

There are two ways in which the proposals might be unfair on shareholders. If it could be shown that they add up to an expropriation of shareholders' assets, then that would certainly be unfair and possibly even illegal. Secondly, if it could be shown that the regulator's assumptions about the scope for improved efficiency are impossibly demanding, then that would also be unfair because it would mean TransCo would not

be able to achieve the allowed rate of return. It is virtually impossible for a journalist to make a realistic assessment of the second of these possibilities for it requires detailed analysis of the integrity of the forecasts. The targets seem harsh to the point of being virtually impossible but then all cost-reduction programmes are thought impossible by those who have to carry them out until they are actually tried. An adjudication will have to await the MMC.

The possibility of expropriation is easier to address. The regulator's proposals on depreciation, whatever she may claim, are certainly at variance with the more liberal approach authorised by the MMC in 1993. The MMC said British Gas should be allowed to depreciate its assets on the basis of their replacement cost or book value.

What Ofgas is proposing is that they be depreciated on the basis of what investors actually paid for those assets, then that would be something in the detail which does, but on the face of it, Ofgas is allowing TransCo to recoup shareholders' original capital through depreciation.

It might have been a lot worse, for there is a third approach which a few wild voices

were urging on the regulator. This is the one that assumes that the gas industry has no long-term future and that there is therefore no need to replace the company's network of pipes, pumping stations and storage facilities. In these circumstances the industry would become regulated on a cash-flow basis, taking no account at all of the need to replace the company's stock of capital. Now this really would be expropriation for depreciation has another role besides being a source of funds for future expenditure - that of recovering the cost of past investment. On what might be called "the depreciation-free" approach, the industry would be progressively run down until there was nothing left. If Clare Spottiswoode had opted for this method, then shareholders really would have a case.

On the approach she does adopt, the effect is to allow lower prices now at the expense of consumers in the future. For if gas does have a long-term future, someone is one day going to have to pay the replacement cost of the industry's assets. What Ms Spottiswoode is allowing by way of depreciation won't cover the bill. But that is all a long way in the future and, in any case, not of direct concern to shareholders. There is a lot of detail in the proposals, and quite a bit of unexplained fudge too, so it is possible that expropriation is involved. But on methodology alone, the MMC is going to find it hard to support TransCo against Ms Spottiswoode.

## Hodder warns of plunge in first-half profits

MATHEW HORSMAN  
Media Editor

Profits at Hodder Headline, publishers of John le Carré's spy novels, will plunge by 50 per cent year-on-year in the first half of 1996, the company's chief executive warned shareholders yesterday.

The profit warning helped lop 36p off the company's shares, which closed at 224p.

Generally poor trading conditions in the UK book trade, which have affected even big publishers such as Harper-Collins and Penguin, were to blame. Tim Hely Hutchinson said: "The company also lacks a wide range of bestsellers in the early part of 1996."

He discounted suggestions that the collapse earlier this year of the Net Book Agreement, the price-fixing scheme that had underpinned retail prices in the book trade for almost a century, had led to the profits collapse.

"Profits have been stagnating for everyone," Mr Hely Hutchinson said. "Indeed, it's a good thing the NBA was abandoned, or we might have been even worse off." He added that sales were up 15 per cent in the first four months of 1996, partly on the strength of aggressive marketing.

Last year, the company had pre-tax profits of £5.7m, on revenues of £83.8m.

The end of the NBA has led to a market highly divided between the high-volume chains,

including supermarkets such as Asda which stock a limited number of popular books, and the smaller, specialist bookshops. Smaller retailers warned that the collapse of the NBA would lead to financial ruin for the local shop.

Analysts agreed the market for books in the UK was generally soft, but said there was no sign yet of widespread problems among small retailers.

Publishers, however, have seen their margins squeezed, as they fight for market share and aggressive marketing.

The shares have spiked and fallen in the past, following warnings about profit levels.

The company yesterday announced the publication later this year of Mr le Carré's new book, *The Tinker of Panama*, which Mr Hely Hutchinson expected would help the company recover in the second half.

## Stormy quarter cuts General Accident's profits

JOHN EISENHAMMER  
Financial Editor

The tough winter on both sides of the Atlantic tore a large hole in General Accident's first-quarter earnings, as the general insurer yesterday heralded a recovery in motor premiums.

GA's pre-tax operating profit slumped to £55m in the first three months, down from £112m in the same period last

year. But the market reacted with relief that the results were no worse than expected and pushed the shares 19p higher to 654p, encouraged by good growth in investment income, and a robust net asset value.

GA provided further much-awaited evidence of the turnaround in motor premiums around a long period of slide, having increased commercial motor rates by 6 per cent in

February and private rates by 4 per cent in April. "Motor rates could well continue to move up during the year," said Bob Scott, chief executive.

On the property side, private household premiums are at the same level as a year ago while rates on commercial lines have drifted slightly lower. Mr Scott said there are no plans for rate increases on either of the property lines.

First-quarter investment income at GA was up at £136m from £115m. Net asset value, which many analysts use as a measure of the strength of the business, held up near the top of forecasts at 651p. Operating earnings per share fell to 6.8p from 16.6p a year ago.

Claims from property damage due to the unexpected harsh winter in the US and the UK cost the insurer £70m. The

world-wide general insurance underwriting result was a loss of £96m compared with a loss of £14m a year earlier.

There is very little surprise. Really the story is one of severe weather on both sides of the Atlantic. The underlying trend is still pretty difficult," said Rob Procter of Lehman Brothers.

Referring to the recent merger between Sun Alliance and Royal Insurance, Mr Scott said

GA had no similar plans and would be making no acquisition moves while it beds down Prudential Mutual, the life office which it took control of three months ago. Mr Scott said the focus for expansion would remain Europe, notably France. "We are looking all the time, we have got a few things we are working on, but we are not anticipating doing anything in the immediate future," he said.

Referring to the recent merger between Sun Alliance and Royal Insurance, Mr Scott said

## Fear of former ways return to haunt Wace

TRICK TOOHER

Specialist printing and imaging group Wace raised fears of a return to bad old ways yesterday when a profits warning sent the shares tumbling 44p to 223p.

The company, which had a notorious reputation for disappointing investors, had been getting back on an even keel under new management led by Trevor Grice following the abrupt departure of chief executive John Clegg four years ago.

But yesterday analysts cut their pre-tax forecasts from £7m to about £2.2m after Wace told its annual shareholders' meeting that industry destocking, rising raw material costs and pricing pressures would lead to lower profits this year.

Although its US and continental European businesses are performing in line with expectations, domestic market and packaging and labelling are particularly tough.

Analysts said profits at Ferry Pickering, the packaging and folded cartons group bought for £26m last year, will be some £50,000 below forecast.

The profits warning is a setback for Mr Grice, the Yorkshire-born chartered accountant who joined Wace when the shares hovered just above 60p.

He engineered a rapid turnaround in fortunes, first by cutting costs and reducing the

sky-high level of debts to manageable levels. More recently, he has tried to re-position Wace away from pre-press printing towards an integrated business offering clients, who include British Airways and food retailer Asda, a "one-stop shop" service embracing pre-press, imaging, cartons and labels.

However, analysts are concerned that while Mr Grice is a proven cost-cutter he has yet to show he can grow the business in difficult market conditions.

"(He) is just not making progress other than through reorganisation. It's more of the same bad news," said one analyst. Another was sceptical about Wace's ambitions to reinvent itself. "I don't like being sold concepts," said one analyst. "I look at a boring manufacturing sector."

Under John Clegg, Mr Grice's predecessor, Wace expanded at break-neck speed through a series of acquisitions in the late Eighties and early Nineties.

The onset of severe recession in the advertising and printing industries led to a string of profits warnings, and Mr Clegg's tenure at the top ended in controversy in 1992 amid allegations of insider share dealing involving members of his own family. These were the subject of a DTI inquiry whose findings have yet to be published.

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# business

## The spirits are lagging at Allied

### THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

This was a dismal performance from Allied Domecq but the market had been fully briefed and, in the event, investors shrugged off a 24 per cent fall in pre-tax profits from £416m to £317m and the shares fell only 5p to 497p.

That will come as cold comfort, however, to anyone in the stock for any length of time. They have underperformed the market by 20 per cent over the past year, 30 per cent over three and a depressing 40 per cent since 1991.

It is little wonder that investors have pinned so much hope on new chairman Sir Christopher Hogg, the wunderkind of Courtaulds and Reuters and one of the founding fathers of what many see as Allied's best road to salvation, *deleveraging*.

For a market obsessed by the mantra of focus, Allied is a totally unacceptable mish-mash of interests, with a portfolio of mainly second-string spirits brands competing for management attention with an illogical, if better placed, retailing side, taking in managed pubs, Victoria Wines off-licences, Baskin Robbins and Dunkin' Donuts.

Whether the company has the chutzpah to take the radical steps required to create a rational group, however, is unclear. While Sir Christopher is seen as a catch for Allied, City analysts will tell you privately of their doubts over the quality of the rest of the top management. They are at least on notice that they need to shape up or ship out.

Certainly the group has a patchy record, even disregarding the difficult markets in which it currently trades. It plainly overpaid for Pedro Domecq, the ill-fated Spanish/Mexican drinks business that continues to suffer from high Latin American inflation and the collapse in value of the peso. And it can fairly be questioned for the price it achieved in the recent sale of a clutch of former Lyons food businesses.

The challenges facing Allied are rather more simple to enumerate than to overcome. It must try and push through price rises in the spirits arm where a 1 per cent improvement would add £27m to trading profits; it must focus on its leading brands – Ballantine, Kahlua, Beefeater and Sauza; it must make inroads into the £350m of its cost base over which it has some control; finally it must bring to fruition the long overdue exit from the Carlsberg Tetley brewing venture.

Looking further ahead, though, shareholder value is only likely to be created by focusing on what it is good at, retailing, and getting rid of the spirits arm it is struggling to make a success of. On the basis of some analysts' calculations such a deal might put a value of maybe 670p on the shares.

In the meantime, forecasts of about £604m in the year to August and £689m next time put the shares on a

prospective price/earnings ratio of 14 falling to 12. With a same again 24p dividend likely, the shares yield 6 per cent, which puts a solid floor under the price. Good value.

### Gases still firing for BOC

BOC continues to demonstrate the rock-steady virtues of its industrial gases business. While the rest of the chemicals sector is riding the down-slope of the industry's roller-coaster cycle, BOC is still just beginning to benefit from the increasingly mature world economic recovery.

Yesterday's announcement of pre-tax profits up 12 per cent to £217m in the six months to March owed much to another strong result from the core gases operation.

Although there continue to be some concerns surrounding the US market, the caution expressed by new chief executive, Danny Rosenkranz, in February seems in retrospect to have been more to do with the severe winter weather than any fundamental weakness. Indeed recent price increases have stuck in America and good demand and firm prices seem to have boosted profits in near-

ly all the main gas markets of the world. As a result, operating profits from the division firmed 10 per cent to £198m.

There continues to be no shortage of investment opportunities. Capital expenditure was jacked up from £212m to £324m in the six months, and most of that related to gases. The focus there remains the US, and although demand for large gas separation plants for customers like US Steel is now starting to slow, BOC reckons there are still 12 to 18 months of demand to go for.

Further out, the potential for stepping up construction of similar plants in rapidly growing Pacific economies is huge. But while there are plenty of opportunities to invest, the challenge remains to lift gas margins from the 14.8 per cent they reached in the second quarter to nearer the 18 per cent or more achieved by the industry's best like Air Products and Praxair of the US.

Elsewhere, the vacuum and distribution operations continue to motor, raising profits 39 per cent to £43.6m in the latest period. A flattening in demand from the semiconductor industry may slow growth in the short term, but the fundamentals remain sound.

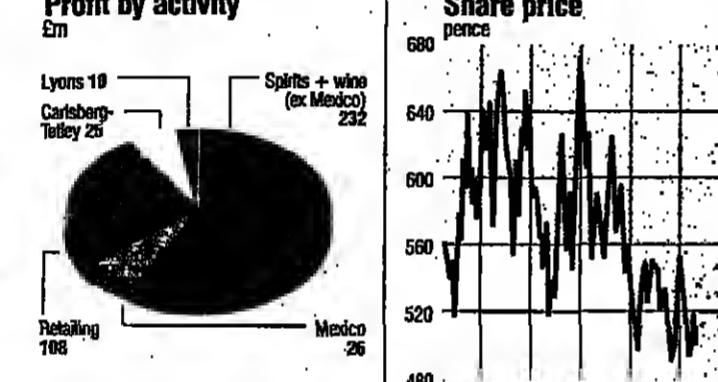
BOC's Achilles' heel remains health care, where US hospital consolidation and spending cut-backs hit sales of anaesthesia machines and divisional profits slumped 9 per cent to £28.4m.

### Allied Domecq: at a glance

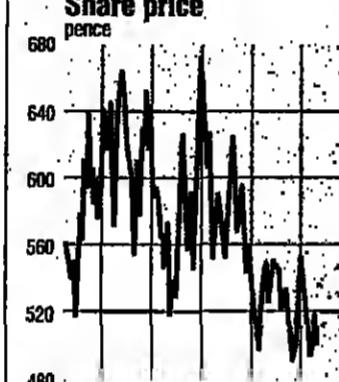
Market value: £5.16bn, share price 497p

	full year	half year	
turnover (£m)	5.42	5.62	6.05
Pre-tax profits (£m)	52.9	62.8	49.4
Earnings per share (pence)	29.5	37.6	22.6
Dividends per share (pence)	21.4	22.7	27.6

### Profit by activity



### Share price



But the real problem is in inhaled anaesthetic gases, where the newer Supreme is only just offsetting the continued decline of the original Forane, off-patent since 1993. Despite BOC's defiance that the business is not for sale, it is not clear where it is going.

On James Capel's forecast of profits of £450m this year, the shares, up 7p to 493p, are a firm hold on a forward p/e of 16.

### Hope builds up at Westbury

During the housing market's heyday in 1989, Cheltenham-based housebuilder Westbury racked up profits of £35m and basked in the reflected glory of a share price above 250p. Hopes of ever revisiting those halcyon days looked pretty fond in the loss-making, provision-loaded early Nineties.

But tangible evidence of a housing market recovery, and another set of resilient results, is encouraging such talk again. According to the Halifax Building Society, house prices have risen in each of the last nine months to April. Against this more benign background, a 10 per cent drop in Westbury's pre-tax profits to £1.15m for the year to February may seem disappointing.

But the figures included a £1.7m exceptional charge taken for the rights issue funded acquisition of Clarke Homes, BICC's housebuilding arm. Operating margins actually rose again to 2.1 per cent from 8.5 per cent, thanks to higher volumes and an improved product mix. Private house sales were 7 per cent higher, while houses fetched an average selling price of £68,413, up 5 per cent, reflecting a further increase in the proportion of detached houses sold. These will soon account for half of Westbury's business.

All this was achieved in what Westbury admits were "difficult" market conditions where buyers are still calling the shots. For example, Westbury paid average incentives of £3,555 in the second half, or 5.1 per cent of selling prices, versus £2,431 in the first half. Building market share is clearly the name of the game as conglomerates unbundl their housing assets and the sector consolidates. The Clarke deal, which expanded Westbury's land bank from 6,800 to 8,700 plots, was therefore timely though further in-fill acquisitions are not being ruled out.

The current year has got off to a good start with sales reservations, excluding Clarke, up 10 per cent on last year. House broker Pannone Gordon looks for 1997 profits of £21.6m, putting the shares up 6p to 210p yesterday – on a p/e of 13. About right, but even a small dose of price inflation would see the stock testing new highs.

### IN BRIEF

• Littlewoods Pools announced it was axing nearly 600 jobs in a bid to fend off competition from the National Lottery. The company said 280 full and part-time jobs will be lost at two sites in Merseyside under a plan to improve the pools coupon-checking business. It is also closing its operation in Hillington, near Glasgow, with the loss of 318 jobs by mid-August. The latest cuts come on top of 500 job losses announced last August, which were also blamed on competition from the National Lottery.

• Higher newsprint costs and a drop in display advertising revenues helped push pre-tax profits at the Telegraph group down by more than 60 per cent to just £6.6m, on higher revenues, in the first quarter of 1996. The company also blamed poor figures from its 25 per cent-owned Australian associate, Fairfax, which has been affected by the slowdown in the domestic economy. Revenues advanced on the strength of a 10p increase in the cover price of the *Daily Telegraph* since the end of the cover price war. The company said the display advertising markets "are showing signs of improvement in the second quarter." The Telegraph, 64 per cent owned by Conrad Black's Hollinger, is likely to be taken private later this year, following an offer of 570p a share by Mr Black for the minority.

• Whitbread has acquired the rights to brew, market and distribute Labatt beers in the British Isles. The deal, which does not include the John Labatt retail pub business, increases Whitbread's share of the premium bottled lager market, where it already includes Heineken Export and Stella Artois in its portfolio. Labatt's brands include Rolling Rock, Labatt Blue and Labatt Ice. The acquisition of the brands, which account for about 10 per cent of the premium bottled lager market, adds 10 per cent to Whitbread's volumes with no increase in capacity.

• Cantab Pharmaceuticals, the biotechnology company, is seeking approval to disapply pre-emption rights for existing shareholders as part of plans to raise £25m from an international share issue. The group said it wanted to broaden its existing shareholder base, which includes NM Rothschild and Abingworth, beyond the existing mix of US holders, venture capitalists and Pfizer, its partner in developing veterinary vaccines. The shares have soared from 108p a year ago to 673p, close to their all-time high, after rising 2p yesterday. The new money is expected to finance development spending for a further two years. The group also announced a loss of £1.96m for the first quarter, up from £1.81m.

• New construction orders bounced back in March, partly due to a sharp rise in private housing which reached its highest level for a year. New orders in the private industrial and private commercial sectors also rose but from depressed levels in February. Infrastructure orders maintained a high level due to a small number of large road contracts. However, the total volume of new orders received by contractors for construction work in Great Britain in the first quarter of 1996 was 9 per cent lower than in the fourth quarter of 1995 and three per cent lower than in the first quarter of 1995.

• The number of jobs shed by the building industry since 1990 is set to reach half a million by the end of this year, construction employers warned yesterday. In its second quarterly review the Construction Industry Employers Council forecast that output would fall again this year by a further 1 per cent while another 30,000 jobs would be lost. Contracting work is showing a worrying slowdown, the council added.

## There's something in them there bore holes

### CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK



Bated breath: The excitement of the gold game

British investors in Timbuktu Gold are holding their breath as they wait to hear whether the Calgary-listed mining company launched in February is either one of the most exciting gold mines ever discovered or merely a hole in the ground. City broker T Hoare specialises in commodity companies in out-of-the-way locations, and placed 4 million shares with British institutions when Timbuktu Gold floated in January.

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# Style gives Cecil solid Oaks team

## Racing

GREG WOOD  
reports from York

When Kevin Keegan arrived at the Knavesmire yesterday, he must have hoped to forget the misfortune which has dogged him in recent months, but the fates are in a particularly spiteful mood when it comes to the Newcastle manager. Not content simply with the elimination of Bride's Reprisal, owned by Keegan, from the first race as the result of a technical error, they then decreed that Magnificent Style would win the day's big race with a striking demonstration of where the Magpies were wrong.

Like the football team, Henry Cecil's filly was quickly into her stride in the Musidora Stakes and had soon secured an impressive lead, but it was in her response to a challenge with the winning post in sight that the comparison broke down.

At various stages of the final three furlongs, all four of her opponents appeared ready to deliver a major threat, but Magnificent Style bravely repelled one after another to eventually run out the one-and-three-quarter length winner. Required viewing, perhaps, be-

fore big games at St James's Park next season.

The success gave Cecil his sixth Musidora in the last 11 years, and two of those winners, Diminuendo and Snow Bride, went on to win the Oaks, the latter admittedly thanks to Aliyah's disqualification. At present, however, Magnificent Style is simply the latest Classic trial winner who is not engaged in the main event itself, and it will be up to Mahmoud Fustok, her owner, whether she is added to the Oaks field at a cost of £15,000.

If Fustok listens to her trainer, though, he may opt to keep his money in his pocket, and ante-post punters should do likewise until his decision is known. "She's still learning and she'll improve for this and I think over another two furlongs she'd have kicked away again," Cecil said. "Epsom's not the ideal course for her, but if we had a bit of give in the ground she'd get away with it. If it was very firm it might do her harm and we might have to revert to the Ribblesdale [at Royal Ascot] or Irish Oaks."

Epsom will doubtless be watered in the run-up to the Derby meeting, but a sound surface must still be the strong favourite. Cecil, meanwhile,

has two other leading candidates for the Oaks behind



Magnificent Style repels Sili Sia and Obsessive (left) in yesterday's Musidora Stakes

Photograph: Phil Cole/Allsport

for the Oaks in Lady Caris, a winner at Lingfield on Saturday, and Quota, who was the deeply impressive winner of the 1,000 Guineas.

William Hill, though, will lay 10-11, but even that is hardly realistic about a filly who is far from certain to run.

Mick Kinane, who rode the perfect front-running race on Magnificent Style, was completing a double, having taken the opening maiden on the promising debutante, Dance

Parade. Kinane was despatching on Paul Cole's filly for Richard Quinn, who was otherwise engaged as a witness at a disciplinary hearing at Portman Square.

Cole was annoyed that Quinn, who was not himself on trial, had missed a winner as a result, and it is perplexing that the inquiry was scheduled for the opening day of a major meeting. Dance Parade may now contest the Queen Mary

Stakes at Royal Ascot, which should give Quinn a chance to retrieve yesterday's losses.

Kinane, meanwhile, did not emerge from yesterday's meeting entirely in credit. Following his head defeat on Honourless in the 10-furlong handicap, the Irish champion was called before the stewards to defend a charge of using his whip with excessive force. He failed to convince them, and was banned for two days, 23 and 24 May.

# Kellaway's Glory to bring House down

RICHARD EDMONDSON

By cruel irony, today's Dante Stakes is sponsored by Home-owners, which, it appears, is exactly what punters won't be if they invest heavily in the race.

About the only trainer radiating confidence in the seven-runner Derby trial is Glory Of Dancer's man, Paul Kellaway, and he would fancy his chances even if he was putting his saddle on a frog.

The nicely short favourite today is Peter Chapman-Ryan's Nash House, who is an amazing 5-1 for the Derby despite his sole achievement being a maiden win at Newbury. To back him is like jumping on the chap who wins the dad's race at school sports day on his way to Atlanta.

Dushyantor, like his stablemate and 1,000 Guineas winner

the former was the better prepared for this occasion but he parked somewhat short of announcing him the likely winner.

"Storm Trooper is working well and I'm very pleased with him," Cecil said. "You can forget the Guineas because that was a farce. I'm not saying that they went very fast and the ground was funny down the middle. The mile was a bit on the sharp side for my horse and this is more his trip."

Dushyantor, like his stablemate and 1,000 Guineas winner

RICHARD EDMONDSON

NAP: Monastir

(Nap 2.25)

NB: Glory Of Dancer

(Nap 3.40)

Bosra Sham, has read all the magazines at the Newmarket pedigree clinic. "He's got very brittle feet and in fact he's got three-quarter cracks at the moment," Cecil said. "I'm doing the same thing with Dushyantor that I did with Commander in Chief [his half-brother and 1993 Derby winner], bringing him back in trip after he won over a mile and half first time up."

"It made more sense to run in the Dante than to give 8lb away in the Glasgow Stakes and he'll come on for this. It's more education than anything else."

With so many disclaimers flying about it may be stuck with Glory Of Dancer (next best 3.40), who not only has the form from last year but also this on his second in the Classic Trial

at Sandown.

Elsewhere, there is a good opportunity for MONAASSIB (nap 2.35), whose trainer, Ed Dunlop, will have to get the rope ladder down from his cloud to collect his trophy after winning the French 1,000 Guineas with Ta Rib on Sunday. There are prospects also with Insider Thuder (3.05) and Indian Spark (4.10), who won the Brocklesby at Doncaster.

for

HYPERION



3.6: PRIDE OF BRIXTON, owned by Bill and Sue, has won 10 races in a row since May. Now, after a bit of a lull, he is back to his best and is a strong favourite for the Oaks.

3.6: PRIDE OF BRIXTON (nap) 4.40 Colours

is an unknown quantity on today's faster ground. Dushyantor, who beat Lallans two lengths in a three-runner stakes race over a mile and a half at Newmarket, has more to do over this shorter distance.

4.0: DAYLIGHT DREAMS, a 2½-length winner from Enchantress in a maiden sprint at Ripon last month, should give a good account of herself. Nash House, five lengths winner of a Newbury maiden over a mile on good to soft ground, makes a big step up in class here and, although bred to stay longer, is a danger.

4.0: DAYLIGHT DREAMS (nap) 4.25 Wild

4.0: DAYLIGHT DREAMS (nap) 4

OLYMPIC COUNTDOWN: Briton is in perfect shape for his seasonal debut in Atlanta on Saturday. Mike Rowbottom reports

## Edwards carrying burden of record

It is a notoriously edgy time of the year for athletes. On the brink of the Olympic season, before all the winter training is put fully to the test, even world champions can have their moments of doubt.

Jonathan Edwards, whose extraordinary success in 1995 culminated in a triple jump world record and title, has never been inclined to take anything for granted. It is no surprise then that, as he prepares for his opening competition in Atlanta on Saturday, his emotions are a mixture of exuberance, confidence, hesitance and diffidence.

Looking forward to the event which will mark the official opening of the Olympic stadium, where he hopes to perform historically two months hence, he hopped, stepped and jumped between conflicting thoughts.

"I am looking forward to jumping in Atlanta," he said. "But I am pretty scared, too. I think it is really daunting that I had a great year last year, but that this is a new season and I need to do it all again. I am very excited. I think I need a competition now... I am probably the most nervous now approaching the season as I have ever been."

His state of mind is familiar to his father, the Rev Andy Edwards, with whom he keeps in regular contact. "It's par for the course for Jonathan at this time of the year," he said. "It's as if you are in the blocks, but you are not out yet because the lights are still red. Jonathan likes to get on and start."

The image is particularly apt given Edwards' activities last weekend, when he re-

duced his 100 metres personal best from 10.60sec to 10.48 at a college invitational event – the Seminole Twilight meeting – on the University of Florida track in Tallahassee.

"He was pleased, as you can imagine," his father said. "His speed was channelled and controlled last year and that was the improvement. Now he knows the speed is there again."

Edwards has always had outstanding speed. Before the

**'There is no question of any complacency. I am just as motivated as I was last year'**

last Olympics he was training with the likes of John Regis and Marcus Adam and keeping up with them for 60 metres – but when it came to his own event he could not translate the velocity into distance.

The transformation of last season, although dependent on many factors, was based on a technical breakthrough which enabled him to effect that translation as he skipped, rather than stomped through his jumps.

Assuming that his technique is now firmly established, there is no reason to suppose that greater speed cannot produce greater distances than his current world record of 18.29 metres.

In an effort to maintain continuity, Edwards has prepared for this season just as he did at this time last year. For the last two months he has been training with Dennis Nobles in Tallahassee and benefiting from the close family support which is so important to him – his wife, Alison, and young sons, Samuel and Nathan, are living with him in rented accommodation near the track.

"It has been wonderful," Edwards said. "From a family point of view, I don't think we have appreciated how much pressure we have been under until we actually got away from it all. We have had a lot of time just being normal, going around the shops and nobody knowing who I am. That has been very, very enjoyable."

Last year's success clearly bewildered him at times. But he is no impressionable youngster... 30 – it was his birthday last Friday – he is not about to get carried away by it all. He has down as well as up to remember in his career – failing to qualify for the last Olympic final, losing the 1990 Commonwealth title in the final round, seeing his 1994 effectively ruined by the Epstein-Barr virus which has had so many athletes low.

"On one level, my life is exactly the same. I have got two young boys and a wife and they keep my feet on the ground pretty well. Changing dirty nappies – or diapers, as they call them over here – brings you down to earth. There are still lots of doubts and question marks in my mind about whether I will be able to jump well again, so there is no question of any complacency. I am

just as motivated now, and perhaps more so than I was at this time last year."

That motivation will have been further sharpened by the weekend performance of Mike Conley, the reigning Olympic triple jump champion, who will be Edwards' main opponent on Saturday.

Competing in Springfield, the 33-year-old set an outstanding personal best of 8.49 metres in the long jump – the event at which he won a World

Championship bronze medal back in 1983.

Conley is clearly in the mood and shape to test the Briton in Atlanta – on Saturday, and perhaps two months hence as well. It will be interesting to see how he handles the mental challenge of facing Edwards after the crushing defeat that the Briton inflicted on him last year.

Needless to say, Edwards is not writing off any of his potential rivals this year and, despite last season's results, Conley retains a special significance in his mind. Studying videos of the American in action made a significant contribution to the change in style Edwards achieved last year.

Conley has carried around a burden or reputation for many years. Now that burden has been transferred to Edwards' shoulders.

"I have always got this 18.29 distance hanging over me, and my expectations are so much

higher than they have ever been," Edwards said. "So it has been up and down. I mean, on paper it looks good. Psychologically, I don't feel, perhaps, wonderful, but then I think that I, hopefully, can jump well and instil a little bit of confidence. It is very much anticipation now. The season is so close I can reach out and touch it."

Whatever happens on Saturday and in the coming weeks, Edwards will treat his opponents with respect.

"When I go out to compete, my attitude is to be the best that I can. I am not, 'I must beat X, Y and Z' and I will direct a certain amount of aggression towards them..." There is no real question of psychological warfare or one-upmanship. But if I go out and jump further than anyone else and that puts one over on them, well then that is the way it goes."

Which is about as close as Jonathan Edwards gets to issuing a warning.



In focus: Edwards is the centre of attention after breaking the world triple jump record in Gothenburg last year

Photograph: Andy Heading/Empics

## Pollock lets Lancashire off the hook

### Cricket

**MICHAEL AUSTIN**  
reports from Old Trafford  
Warwickshire 312-6  
Lancashire 316-9  
(Lancashire win by one wicket)

This riveting contest may have decided only which of these already qualified counties have home advantage in the Benson and Hedges Cup quarter-final draw. Yet the game had the cutting edge of a Lord's final, Lancashire winning with four leg-overs from the next-to-last ball.

Lancashire are the cup holders but Warwickshire lifted the

NatWest Trophy last September and the shrewd money is already on their meeting somewhere further along the way in this revised 50-over competition. Reeve's team have huddling self-confidence but Lancashire also have a brashness about them, typified by Lloyd's ebullience.

Even so, the subtlety of Reeve's play has exploited some loose Lancashire strokes, notably when Michael Watkinson, his opposing captain, had promoted himself in the order to set the score moving he pulled a catch to Reeve and Ian Austin, who was also uplifted in

the batting order, played another wild stroke and was bowled. As for Warwickshire, they used a more conventional batting approach and all contributed something, notably Nick Knight and Neil Smith, who accelerated the total to 112 for 2 in 15 overs.

Smith's half-century took only 43 balls and Pollock later pillaged 59 not out from 48 deliveries. Gary Yates returned a creditable 3 for 65 but others proved expensive. Michael Atherton fielded admirably, holding a sharp catch to dismiss Dominic Oster but the England

captain did not prosper long in Lancashire's reply.

Atherton failed to offer an authentic stroke to Ashley Giles and was leg-before, but Lancashire acquired 100 for 2 from 15 overs before sustaining their tempo in the rush for victory.

Dougie Brown, who had battded fluently, then held a remarkable diving catch at deep square leg to oust Jason Gallian whose innings of 61 did much to put Lancashire within sight of success. When he was out, they needed 109 from 15 overs. Paul Smith later held a stunning catch but Lancashire prevailed.

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**Dashing Dakin too good for Durham**

### ROUND-UP

Jon Dakin hit a splendid unbeaten 108 to steer Leicestershire to a thrilling four-wicket victory over Durham with two balls to spare in their Benson and Hedges Cup game at Grace Road yesterday.

Leicestershire, chasing a victory target of 288, looked in trouble at 128 for 4 in the 26th over, but the 23-year-old Dakin and Darren Maddy, 21, shared a fifth-wicket stand of 153 in 23 overs to transform the match.

Both batsmen compiled career-best scores in the competition – as did Durham's John Morris earlier in the day. His 145 was not only a personal best but also Durham's highest individual innings in any form of one-day cricket.

Gloucestershire secured a place in the quarter-finals thanks to a 21-run win over Hampshire at Bristol. Chasing Gloucestershire's 272 for 9, Hampshire reached 162 for 3 but collapsed to 251 all out. Mark Alleyne won the gold award with 75 from 33 balls for the home side.

At Derby, Dean Jones guided Derbyshire to a six-wicket win over the Minor Counties. The Australian veteran scored 142 from only 101 balls.

## Northamptonshire home in on immediate target

### DEREK PRINGLE

reports from Northampton  
Yorkshire 205-9  
Northamptonshire 206-3  
(Northants win by 7 wickets)

Playing for precious little more than the right of home advantage in the quarter-finals, which they also enjoyed yesterday, Northamptonshire comfortably beat Yorkshire, who also qualified for the knockout stage of the Benson and Hedges Cup, which is draw this morning.

With no Allan Lamb this sea-

son – busy alternating his time between stewing on *MasterChef* and suing Imran Khan – the vigorous batting often needed to change the course of one-day games had fallen to others like David Capel, now opening and doing a passable imitation of a man in form with 82 in 108 balls, including 12 boundaries.

His partnership of 148 with the captain, Rob Bailey, who scored an unbeaten 75, is a new club record against Yorkshire and easily secured a game the visitors never looked like contesting: their total of 205 for 9 was some 30 runs below par for the dry, hale-hued pitch.

Ambrone, back at Wantage Road on a one-year contract,

Australian was on 81, cost Yorkshire dear.

In spite of this Yorkshire, who won the toss and batted, did not always enjoy the best of fortune. On the same pitch last Sunday, Curly Ambrose took 3 for 3 and was rapping hatting gloves every other ball. Yesterday, the rising hall was less frequent, though one of the few that did fizz struck Martyn Maxon on his right thumb, forcing him to retire until the ninth wicket had fallen when he returned, hitting the last ball of the innings for four.

The others, two of which involved Darren Gough, were appalled. His sending-back of Michael Bevan when the Aus-

tralian was on 81, cost Yorkshire dear.

There remains a question about the bowling. Essex were lucky when Nasser Hussain's 12-yard throw from point ran out Peter Bowler, when the dangerous Graham Rose, up the order, mis-hit to deep mid-wicket and especially when Gough got stuck in later, howling a pacy spell in normal bowling boots, clearly normalising his flip-flops for the trip home.

Ambrone, back at Wantage Road on a one-year contract,

bowled impressively but without luck especially with the new ball. Later in the innings he peppered Gough with a series of toe-crushing workers.

If, by the way Gough bobbled about, it was an exchange that clearly brought the Yorkshire fast bowler pain, it also brought the best line of the day from a wag in the crowd, who shouted, "Get some Doc Martens on", in reference to Northamptonshire's sponsor. Never one to heed advice, Gough got stuck in later, howling a pacy spell in normal bowling boots, clearly normalising his flip-flops for the trip home.

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■ Surrey completed a clean sweep of Group D victories with a five-wicket success against Ireland at Eglinton yesterday.

Stuart Law completed his third century in four days, a masterly 116 off 93 balls, to win the gold award and the deep respect of a small crowd but lost the vital bat to put Essex into the quarter-finals yesterday. He had riddled Somerset's bowlers, hitting two sixes and 18 fours, but Glamorgan's tearaway triumph at Canterbury meant it was all in vain.

The steely but elegant Queenslander is reviving Essex's fortunes faster than can be expected. Instead of another year of rebuilding, they lead the Championship and if they are out of the first one-day competition there seems every possibility they will be close to winning another.

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### Northants v Yorkshire

### Final tables

Group A	P	W	L	NR	Tot	RR
Warwickshire	5	3	1	1	10	35.98
Lancashire	5	2	2	1	10	3.93
Derbyshire	5	1	3	1	10	3.43
Minor Counties	5	0	5	0	26.53	

Group B	P	W	L	NR	Tot	RR
Leicestershire	5	4	1	0	11	1.00
Yorkshire	4	3	2	0	9	15.28
Nottinghamshire	4	2	2	0	4	4.55
Worcestershire	4	1	3	0	2	2.28
Scotsland	4	0	4	0	3.26	

Group C	P	W	L	NR	Tot	RR
Glamorgan	5	4	1	0	8	8.74
Kent	5	1	0	0	2	4.08
Somerset	5	3	2	0	11	2.24
Midlands						



